Antislavery and Disunion, 1858-1861

STUDIES IN THE RHETORIC OF COMPROMISE AND CONFLICT

J. Jeffery Auer, editor

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Prepared under the auspices of The Speech Association of America

J. Jeffery Auer, Editor

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ANTISLAVERY AND DISUNION, 1858–1861: STUDIES IN THE RHETORIC OF COMPROMISE AND CONFLICT

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Preface

In the spring of 1820, Massachusetts state senator John Holmes opened a letter from Thomas Jefferson. The Missouri Compromise, he read, "is a reprieve only, not a final sentence. A geographical line, coinciding with a marked principle, moral and political, once conceived and held up to the angry passions of men, will never be obliterated; and every new irritation will mark it deeper and deeper."[1] A week after his seventy-sixth birthday the elder statesman in Monticello heard the "fire-bell in the night" more clearly than many younger men in Washington.

Three decades later, and for a new generation of leaders, the "angry passions" burned brightly, and each day brought a "new irritation." Nowhere was this conflict over "a marked principle" more apparent than in public discussion on the companion issues of antislavery and disunion. Indeed, as one reporter observed at the 1860 Democratic Convention, "Every speech widens the breach."[2]

The studies in the present volume report some of that speechmaking—the rhetoric of compromise and conflict—by representative Americans. Thus this work represents an inquiry into the nature of public address on antislavery and disunion and into the conditions which led to the disruption of public discussion and the substitution for it of armed conflict.

Our purpose in these studies has been to provide a record of rhetoric that failed to maintain peace—even though peace was not always its goal. No definitive answer is made to the persistent question about the causes of the Civil War; the several contributors present evidence supporting varied points of view. But by his analysis and evaluation of rhetoric, each investigator contributes to an understanding of this critical period in American history.

Historical studies must, of necessity, investigate rhetoric, identify persuasive appeals, and examine the causative factors influencing men's minds, impelling them to act in one way or another. Historical events do not take place in a vacuum; a people's behavior develops from their reactions and adjustments to the forces playing upon them. Economic circumstances, social pressures, cultural heritages, political developments, and the very geography and aerography of the environment create the psychological forces that set off reactions and motivate decisions.

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[1] Jefferson to Holmes, Apr. 22, 1820, in Adrienne Koch and William Peden, eds., *The Life and Selected Writings of Thomas Jefferson* (New York, 1944), p. 698.

[2] *The New York Times,* Apr. 28, 1860.

Decisions, however, do not bloom unaided in the minds of men. It is the function of rhetoric to give form to economic, social, and political problems, and to establish alternative solutions. Most of the alert citizens of the United States, for example, had done a good deal of thinking about the issues of antislavery and disunion in the critical years before the Civil War. But public speakers crystallized commonly unarticulated notions into hardened opinions.

For years before Sumter the sectional arguments had been hammered out in private talks and public forums; the causes of the arguments ultimately became the causes of the war. But always before in their history the American people, despite great diversity in backgrounds and interests, had retained their one nationhood. The explanation "is found in the American genius for compromise, for adjustment, for conciliation. Compromise was the American way of life, and the spirit of tolerance and mutual agreement infused American religious beliefs, economic structures, and political apparatus."[3] The Constitution itself was "a bundle of compromises," and it was maintained by compromise in 1820 on the Missouri controversy, in 1833 on the tariff and nullification issues, in 1850 by the "finality" of Clay's Omnibus Bill, and on other occasions by a score of lesser adjustments.

Why, then, did the American people, trained in the democratic tradition of free speech and compromise, ultimately fail to talk out their differences? Was it because, as Carl Becker has concluded, "there are some issues that cannot be raised and some things that cannot be heard in a democratic society without impairing the efficiency of the democratic method"?[4] Did the people fail because the concepts of "natural justice" and "human liberty" involved in the slavery controversy were, as Avery Craven has suggested, such a threat to vested interests that conditions were inevitably created "in which calm and rational discussion, tolerance of differences, and compromise, would be impossible"?[5] Was the failure, as Robert Gunderson has appraised it, due to the fact that a rigid system of constitutional government provided no formal procedure for a referendum and no time for thoughtful reconsideration of changing issues? Was it because, as William Hesseltine has speculated, the principle of moderation could not be "dramatized . . .

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[3] William B. Hesseltine, Foreword to Robert Gray Gunderson, *Old Gentlemen's Convention: The Washington Peace Conference of 1861* (Madison, Wis., 1961), p. v.

[4] *New Liberties for Old* (New Haven, 1941), p. 108.

[5] "The Civil War and the Democratic Process," *Abraham Lincoln Quart.*, 4 (1947), 292; *idem*, "The 1840's and the Democratic Process," *Jour. of Southern History*, 16 (1950), 161–176.

so that it could overcome the partisan rhetoric which admits only unqualified alternatives to human problems"?[6]

These questions are still being debated, even a century after the crisis. What is very apparent, however, is that by the 1850s the still-evolving American nation was so fundamentally divided that in the view of many no settlement short of war *seemed* possible.[7] As George M. Troup phrased it, "The argument is exhausted and we must stand to our arms!"[8] But if, as some historians have insisted, the issues of antislavery and disunion so vitally affected the fundamental structure of American society as to make discussion of them impossible, *many Americans were obviously not aware of that fact.* They continued to talk, down to the very eve of conflict, in public meetings, conferences, and conventions, believing that they could substitute argument for war, settling their differences by talking them out instead of by shooting them out.

In this volume we consider some of that talk, investigating the climate of public discussion during the last two and a half years of peace. Twenty-three studies deal with as many samples of American public address on the issues of antislavery and disunion, chronologically organized, in the period from September, 1858, to April, 1861. These are *representative* and *significant* speeches and not, of course, the only important ones. They have been selected to combine notable factors of occasion and place, audience attitude, and speaker's purpose. We do not suggest that only in the speechmaking after September, 1858, may clues be found to indicate why persuasion failed; for very practical reasons we determined that our inquiry should be deep, rather than wide, and thus limited ourselves to the 1858–1861 period.

Why do we begin with a study of an almost forgotten public debate in Philadelphia in 1858, and close with a study of Lincoln's inaugural address in 1861? The easy answer is that a coherent series of studies must start somewhere, and that any given point is necessarily an arbitrary one. A better answer is that by 1858 most of the critical arguments of past decades on antislavery and disunion had begun to crystallize. Indeed, by 1858 many of them were stereotyped. They were expressed in terms of divergent and irreconcilable interpretations of alleged facts supporting a series of relatively standardized conclusions. "Parson" Brownlow and Abram Pryne, on five consecutive days of disputation in the fall of 1858, illuminated most of these common topics. Their debate was, in effect, a review of stock issues, not an exposition of new ones. It "summarized in a convenient text-book form all the arguments that Southerners and abolitionists had been developing."[9] As surely as public discussion of antislavery and disunion moved into its crisis stage after 1858, it reached a climax with the inauguration address of Abraham Lincoln in 1861. Though conflicting interpretations were (and still are) placed upon Lincoln's intent and the effect of the speech, it was a culminating public statement on the issues. With it, conflict by talk ended; after it, conflict by arms began.

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[6] Gunderson, p. 99; [Hesseltine], p. viii.

[7] See Roy Franklin Nichols, *The Disruption of American Democracy* (New York, 1948); *idem*, "1461–1861: The American Civil War in Perspective," *Jour. of Southern History*, 16 (1950), 143–160.

[8] Quoted by William L. Yancey in a speech at Macon, Ga., Aug., 1850, Columbus *Telegraph*, Sept. 14, 1850. As the crisis worsened the phrase was echoed: "The Argument Is Exhausted–Stand by Your Arms!" (editorial headline, Augusta *Daily Constitutionalist*, Nov. 29, 1860).

In exemplifying the rhetoric of compromise and conflict we have kept in mind Jefferson Davis' predictions that "failure will compel us to drink the cup of humiliation even to the bitter dregs of having the history of our struggle written by New England historians,"[10] and have included spokesmen for varied contemporary views. Radical abolitionists as well as southern fire-eaters are heard, and so are the moderates, both northern and southern. Each of the presidential candidates in 1860, Lincoln, Douglas, Breckinridge, and Bell, is represented. As these studies indicate—and this is in itself an important part of the history—Americans of all sorts took to the platform on these issues: politicians, lawyers, editors, preachers, academicians, recent immigrants and first-family sons, men and women, Negroes and whites, the prominent and the obscure. Our selections were not made, however, in order to write personality-centered essays. The purpose was to present, *in situ*, a series of case studies of public address on specific issues and at a particular time in American history. This meant careful consideration of the immediate and the long-range audiences, the specific occasions for speechmaking, and the total historical context, as well as of the speakers and what they said. It also meant analyzing and judging the effects of the speechmaking. In short, we have attempted in each study to make an integration of rhetorical criticism and historical analysis.

Although each contributor was charged with relating his topic to the main theme of the volume, none was required to follow a standard approach, support a group judgment, or even to adopt a common style of writing. "Uniformity," said an earlier editor, "would inevitably have led to sterility." We agreed with this philosophy, and consequently some of our contributors are in disagreement, in matters of both rhetorical criticism and historical interpretation. The editor was responsible for the selection of the individual topics and the contributors, and is now liable for the inclusion of the studies in their present form.

As with three earlier volumes on the history of American public address,[11] this one was developed under the auspices of the Speech Association of America and with the special cooperation of its Committee on the History of American Public Address. In the planning stages A. Craig Baird and Henry Lee Ewbank, who long encouraged the exploration of new directions in the study of public address, were essentially coeditors. Valuable editorial counsel came from Bower Aly, William Norwood Brigance, and Dallas C. Dickey. Many of the contributors served also as critics for other studies in the volume. To all of these persons, and to Lousene Rousseau, the editor is deeply grateful.

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[9] William B. Hesseltine, *The South in American History* (New York, 1943), p. 347.

[10] Carl Sandburg, *Abraham Lincoln: The War Years* (New York, 1939), I, 90.

[11] William Norwood Brigance, ed., *A History and Criticism of American Public Address*, Vols. I, II (New York, 1943), and Marie Kathryn Hochmuth, ed., Vol. III (New York, 1955).

J. J. A.

Indiana University
July, 1962

Contents

PREFACE

1. THE BROWNLOW-PRYNE DEBATE, SEPTEMBER, 1858 1
Gordon F. Hostettler, *Temple University*

2. WILLIAM H. SEWARD ON THE "IRREPRESSIBLE CONFLICT," OCTOBER 25, 1858 29
Robert T. Oliver, *The Pennsylvania State University*

3. JEFFERSON DAVIS, SECTIONAL DIPLOMAT, 1858 51
Ralph Richardson, *University of California, Los Angeles*

4. CONTROVERSY AMONG COLLEGE STUDENTS, 1858–1861 71
Charles W. Lomas, *University of California, Los Angeles*

5. THE OBERLIN-WELLINGTON RESCUE CASE, 1859 85
Warren Guthrie, *Western Reserve University*

6. ROBERT BARNWELL RHETT'S SPEECH, JULY 4, 1859 98
H. Hardy Perritt, *Miles College*

7. THE LYCEUM MOVEMENT AND SECTIONAL CONTROVERSY, 1860 108
Mary W. Graham, *Brooklyn College of the City University of New York*

8. OWEN LOVEJOY ON "THE BARBARISM OF SLAVERY," APRIL 5, 1860 114
George V. Bohman, *Wayne State University*

9. FORD DOUGLASS' FOURTH OF JULY ORATION, 1860 133
Orville A. Hitchcock, *State University of Iowa*
Ota Thomas Reynolds, *Hunter College of the City University of New York*

10. METHODIST DEBATES AND UNION SENTIMENT ON THE BORDER, 1860–1861 152
Robert D. Clark, *University of Oregon*

11. THE DEMOCRATIC CONVENTIONS OF 1860 171
Lindsey S. Perkins, *Brooklyn College of the City University of New York*

12. THE REPUBLICAN NATIONAL CONVENTION OF 1860 193
Kenneth M. Stampp, *University of California, Berkeley*

13. SPRINGFIELD LINCOLN RALLY, 1860 212
Halbert E. Gulley, *University of Illinois*

14. THE CAMPAIGN FOR MEMPHIS, 1860 225
Waldo W. Braden, *Louisiana State University*

15. THE ANNUAL MEETING OF THE PENNSYLVANIA ANTI-SLAVERY SOCIETY, 1860 242
J. Calvin Callaghan, *Syracuse University*

16. THE CAMPAIGN OF STEPHEN A. DOUGLAS IN THE SOUTH, 1860 262
Lionel Crocker, *Denison University*

17. CARL SCHURZ'S REPUBLICAN JUBILATION SPEECH, NOVEMBER 16, 1860 279
Duane E. Tucker, *Bowling Green State University*

18. BENJAMIN MORGAN PALMER'S THANKSGIVING SERMON,1860 291
Wayne C. Eubank, *University of New Mexico*

19. THE SENATE COMMITTEE OF THIRTEEN: DECEMBER 6–31, 1860 310
Carroll C. Arnold, *Cornell University*

20. THE SECESSION DEBATE IN GEORGIA: NOVEMBER, 1860–JANUARY, 1861 331
N. B. Beck, *Purdue University*

21. NEW GOVERNORS SPEAK FOR WAR, JANUARY, 1861 360
William B. Hesseltine, *University of Wisconsin*
Larry Gara, *Wilmington College*

22. THE WASHINGTON PEACE CONFERENCE OF 1861 378
Robert Gray Gunderson, *Indiana University*

23. LINCOLN'S FIRST INAUGURAL ADDRESS 392
Marie Hochmuth Nichols, *University of Illinois*

INDEX 415

Antislavery and Disunion, 1858-1861

The Brownlow-Pryne Debate, September, 1858

GORDON F. HOSTETTLER

1

In the fall of 1858 citizens and visitors in Philadelphia were afforded an opportunity to listen to an unusual, if not unique, public discussion on the issue which was inexorably dividing their nation. For five consecutive evenings a northern abolitionist and a southern newspaper editor, both ministers, debated the question: "Ought Slavery To Be Perpetuated?" Their encounter was noteworthy for two reasons. First, it represented one of the few situations, if not the only one, outside Congress, wherein citizens of the contending sections tested opposing views by resort to public debate. Second, coming at the end of decades of slavery agitation and dispute, it "summarized in a convenient text-book form all the arguments that Southerners and abolitionists had been developing. . . ."[1]

How the Debate Came to Be

The debate was arranged by the disputants themselves. They came to Philadelphia neither upon invitation nor as spokesmen for organized groups. The challenge was issued by the colorful, eccentric, notorious "Parson" William G. Brownlow, editor of the influential Knoxville *Whig*, a leader of Southern Know-Nothings, and an unremitting champion of the South. His advocacy of slavery was matched only by his hatred for abolitionists. " 'A bloody revolution' is the only alternative the Abolitionists of the North intend to present to the South," he wrote, ". . . and we are ready to go into it whenever the ball opens."[2] On June 8, 1856, Brownlow preached a sermon defending slavery, primarily upon scriptural grounds, and assailing abolitionists as depraved persons bent upon destruction of the Union. It was repeated in 1857 before the Southern Commercial Convention in Knoxville. Delegates were enthusiastic. They urged him to print his address and to deliver it in the principal cities of the South.[3] The Parson apparently felt that the South needed little convincing. In any event, in January, 1858, he announced his intention to go as a missionary "to the heathen of New England," and challenged any leading abolitionist, especially Parker or Beecher, to meet him in joint debate.[4] Prominent abolitionists ignored his offer. Perhaps the proclivity of the "Terrible Parson" for rough and unpredictable combat was too well known for men of national reputation to risk an encounter.[5] In early March, however, a northern champion appeared in the person of Abram Pryne, Congregational minister and editor of the *Central Reformer*, an antislavery paper published in McGrawville, Cortland County, New York. Pryne proposed the wording of the topic, asked that the debate be held in New York, demanded four weeks' notice, and listed Gerrit Smith, Mark Hopkins, and Congressman J. R. Giddings as character references.[6]

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[1] William B. Hesseltine, *The South in American History* (New York, 1943), p. 347.

[2] Knoxville *Whig*, Aug. 6, 1853, in E. Merton Coulter, *William G. Brownlow: Fighting Parson of the Southern Highlands* (Chapel Hill, N.C., 1937), p. 95. Typical of Brownlow's attacks upon abolitionists was his characterization of Harriet Beecher Stowe: "She is as ugly as Oriental sin—an abomination in the eyes of civilized people. [She is] a tall, coarse, vulgar-looking woman—stoop shouldered, with a long yellow neck, and a long peaked nose—through which she speaks." (*ibid.*)

The correspondence which ensued not only completed arrangements for the debate, but instituted the dispute itself. After five weeks of waiting, Pryne addressed the Parson: "I have not heard from you—I write to express the hope that after your blustering announcement that you would meet the entire North . . . you will not back out from the first debate offered you."[7] Brownlow responded in two letters, the first of which crossed Pryne's. He assured his opponent that "I am not going to 'back out' as you no doubt *desire* me to do," and he demanded to know whether Pryne was "a white man or a gentleman of color."[8] The point was important to him. Frederick Douglass had displayed some interest in meeting the Parson and had been disdainfully spurned, for "it would be an immeasurable disgrace to debate with a Negro."[9] Pryne replied with quiet asperity: "I can answer, by stating that my father is a Hollander by descent, and my mother's father was a Scotchman, and though not a *very white man*, there is not a drop of negro blood in my veins."[10] Reassured by the reply, Brownlow accepted the debate and listed the following conditions: (1) Philadelphia would be the site; (2) Brownlow would open, speaking up to an hour and a half, with Pryne to observe similar time limits in closing; (3) neither debater should interrupt the other nor should either permit another speaker to participate; (4) the debate should be published in a book, as Pryne had suggested; (5) a minimal fee, also favored by Pryne, should be charged to cover expenses; and (6) wide latitude should be permitted in interpretation of the topic, with each man to be his own judge as to what was germane.[11] Pryne accepted these proposals, but insisted upon one more condition: "The Hall . . . must be open to *all*, of every grade and *color*."[12] The Parson made no specific reply, apparently conceding the presence of free Negroes in his audience to be a necessary evil attendant to a debate in the North.

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[3] Coulter, pp. 95–97. The sermon was printed as suggested (William G. Brownlow, *A Sermon on Slavery* [Knoxville, 1857]).

[4] Arthur C. Cole, *The Irrepressible Conflict, 1850–1865* (New York, 1934), p. 56; Coulter, p. 97.

[5] Coulter, p. 97.

[6] McGrawville (N.Y.) *Central Reformer*, Mar. 10, 1858, in William G. Brownlow and Abram Pryne, *Ought Slavery To Be Perpetuated? A Debate between Rev. W. G. Brownlow and Rev. A. Pryne, Held in Philadelphia, September, 1858* (Philadelphia, 1858), pp. 5–6. This volume contains the texts of the speeches, as well as correspondence incident to arranging the debate. It will be hereafter cited as *Debate*.

[7] Pryne to Brownlow, Apr. 14, 1858 (*Debate*, p. 6).

[8] Brownlow to Pryne, Apr. 20 and Apr. 26, 1858 (*Debate*, pp. 6–8).

[9] Coulter, p. 97.

[10] Pryne to Brownlow, Apr. 28, 1858 (*Debate*, p. 9).

Brownlow's insistence upon wide latitude of discussion was significant. It presaged the nature of the debate to come by revealing that he was in complete sympathy with settled southern conviction, thirty years in the making, that an attack upon slavery was an attack upon the South itself. In making his demand, Brownlow announced his purpose "to discuss the whole slavery question, contrasting the morality and integrity of Northern men, with the morals and integrity of the South."[13] Pryne disavowed any intention of dealing with the issues on a sectional basis: "With me the debate is quite other than a contest between the sections of the Union. . . . It is the institution of slavery, and not the South, upon which I make war."[14] The Parson termed this disclaimer "a fine-spun distinction," declaring, "We are unable in the South, to distinguish between a war upon the South and this institution."[15]

THE CONTENDERS

William G. Brownlow

Although this account centers upon the debate itself, some understanding of the speakers and the forces which shaped them is essential for adequate appraisal of their arguments. The point is especially pertinent in the case of Brownlow. An ardent advocate of slavery and of his section, he still cannot be regarded as a representative spokesman of the Old South. Both his views and personality contravened to make him atypical.

Brownlow's personality was such that he could not have been truly representative of any group. With a limited but self-secured education, he was a unique creation of the rugged wilds of the southern highlands. "He was a product of his time, but his times produced none other like him."[16] Dogmatic beliefs and virulent hates, religious and political, were joined in Brownlow with excessive craving for power and recognition. The combination was combustible. Loud controversy marked every stage of his life. Convinced of the total rectitude of his opinions, the Parson would go to any length to defend them. He was ruthless; customary fairness played no part in his disputes. No slander, abuse, insinuation, or direct charge was beyond him. The families, friends, associates, ancestors of his enemies—anything, however unrelated—were to him legitimate targets for invective. As a Methodist preacher, his object was not merely to win souls, but to crush, even annihilate, Baptists, Presbyterians, Catholics. "Amalgamator" and "degraded offspring of a negro wench" were two of the kinder appellations directed toward one religious foe.[17] "He declared that he feared nothing but the reproaches of his own conscience; and he was blessed with a conscience not celebrated for its vigilance."[18] Religious and political disputes were rough and personal in his day, but few equaled the extremes attained by the Parson. As an editor he "printed such scurrilous charges in such open and direct language as would have led in another age to prosecution of the editor and denial of the publications' rights to the mails."[19] It is little wonder that he was regarded as a "hell-hound";[20] that he was often sued for libel; and that several attempts were made upon his life.[21] No man of such extremist tendencies could be regarded as representative of the South, and much of the animosity evidenced in the Philadelphia debate was attributable to the Parson's remarkable vituperation.

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[11] Brownlow to Pryne, May 15, 1858 (*Debate*, pp. 9–11).

[12] Pryne to Brownlow, June 18, 1858 (*Debate*, p. 14).

[13] Brownlow to Pryne, May 15, 1858 (*Debate*, p. 10). His view was reiterated in a second letter, June 10, 1858 (*ibid.*, p. 12).

[14] Pryne to Brownlow, June 18, 1858 (*Debate*, p. 13).

[15] Brownlow to Pryne, July 8, 1858 (*Debate*, p. 14). This letter set Tuesday, Sept. 7, as the opening date for the debate.

[16] Coulter, p. 400.

Brownlow's political convictions also set him apart from the main stream of that southern thought which would precipitate secession and war. Indeed, he traveled "five hundred miles [to Philadelphia] to defend . . . the very soul of the South of which he was not a part. . . ."[22] Despite his love for the South and his fervent defense of slavery, the Parson was first and always a Union man. He abhorred the states' rights views of Calhoun and the Democrats. Neither a planter nor an aristocrat, he admired these, perhaps even desired to be one; but he possessed no fundamental stake, financial or otherwise, in the system for which they were finally willing to war.[23] He was of, and spoke for, the yeomanry of the uplands, who supported slavery because it provided a solution to the race question, not because it was essential to their way of life.[24] A lifelong, avid Whig,[25] he embraced the American party when the Whig organization collapesd after 1852. Here he achieved a joyous unity of his prejudices—love of the Union, religious bigotry, and hatred for the Democracy.[26] "Know-Nothingism . . ." he cried, "is anti-Romanism, anti-Pope's toeism, anti-Jesuitism, anti-Foreign Pauperism, anti-Foreign mob and whiskeyism, and anti- the whole sacerdotal-hierarchism —corrupt Democracy—and Bedenism."[27] In 1858 Brownlow was still a rabid Know-Nothing, holding high office in its Tennessee organization.[28] When secession came Brownlow remained loyal to the Union. "When I shall have made up my mind to go to hell," he declared, "I will cut my throat and go direct, and not travel round by way of the Southern Confederacy."[29] Imprisoned briefly for treason, he was released to the North, where he lectured and wrote of grisly southern atrocities.[30] In 1863, as a Republican, he returned to Tennessee with Burnside's army, and, with "carpet-bag" support, he was elected governor in 1865 and 1867 and senator in 1869.[31] In time he instituted Negro suffrage, an action which led his enemies to publish remarks he had made in the Philadelphia debate. Twisting the facts, the Parson blandly replied that Pryne had challenged *him* to defend the South, "and I done so with an ability creditable to me, although I was on the wrong side of the subject."[32] Certainly Brownlow's political views, both before and after the debate, make it clear that he was considerably less than the ideal spokesman for the Deep South.

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[17] Coulter, p. 59. For detailed accounts of Brownlow's religious wars see *ibid.*, pp. 17–34, 52–83.

[18] Coulter, p. 398.

[19] Coulter, p. 59. Coulter states further (p. 143): "So easy was it to set the Parson loose on a withering flow of invective, so original as to become amusing, that now and then he was baited for the entertainment that would come in his reply."

[20] W. Darrell Overdyke, *The Know-Nothing Party in the South* (Baton Rouge, 1950), p. 107; see also Hace Tishler, "The Public Speaking of Four Representative Know-Nothings: Brownlow, Hilliard, Crittenden, and Davis," unpub. thesis (Univ. of Virginia, 1955), pp. 32, 59.

[21] Coulter, p. 43. Coulter suggests that a clubbing administered to Brownlow in 1848 may have affected his mind, accounting partially for wildness and recklessness of his behavior in controversy. The present writer is forced to demur on the grounds that he has found no significant difference in the Parson's methods, either in kind or degree, after 1848.

[22] Coulter, p. 108.

[23] Coulter suggests (p. 92) that Brownlow would like to have become a southern

Much that might be said of the Parson's speaking technique is not germane. He arrived in Philadelphia with bronchitis so severe that he was forced to

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aristocrat "if he could only learn the formula," and adds: "It expresses much to say that he did not hate them and never hurled his terrible bolts at them."

[24] Coulter, pp. 85–89, 109; see also Cole, p. 56.

[25] Coulter, pp. 112–119.

[26] Overdyke, p. 107.

[27] Knoxville *Whig*, Nov. 25, 1854, in Tishler, p. 57.

[28] Overdyke, pp. 35, 178–179; see also Tishler, pp. 31–58, and V. M. Queener, "William G. Brownlow as an Editor," *East Tennessee Hist. Soc. Pub.*, 4 (Jan., 1932), p. 79. For Brownlow's rabid Know-Nothing enthusiasm see his *Americanism Contrasted with Foreignism, Romanism, and Bogus Democracy in the Light of Reason, History and Scripture . . .* (Nashville, 1856).

[29] Coulter, pp. 143–144.

[30] See Brownlow, *Sketches of the Rise, Progress, and Decline of Secession; with a Narrative of Personal Adventures Among the Rebels* (Philadelphia, 1862). For detailed accounts of the Parson's opposition to the Confederacy and of his northern triumphs, see Coulter, pp. 125–246; Cole, pp. 291, 389; Hazel Wolf, *On Freedom's Altar* (Madison, 1952), pp. 137–138.

[31] For details, see Coulter, pp. 261–384.

[32] Knoxville *Whig*, May 8, 1867, in Coulter, pp. 335–336. The Parson even went so far as to include in his inaugural address in 1865 the eulogy of the American Union which he had first delivered in his debate with Pryne. See Margaret Manzer, "A Description and Rhetorical Analysis of the Brownlow-Pryne Debates," unpub. thesis (Univ. of Virginia, 1957), p. 9.

employ a reader, Colonel William F. Small, Clerk of the Philadelphia Common Council.[33] But if direct effects of the Parson's personality and delivery, usually considerable,[34] were lost to the audience, the latter was not deprived of a most striking aspect of his speaking—his rare use of language. His extravagant, picturesque style teemed with uncommon similes and imagery. One critic declared: "The Parson's style was amazing. . . . He had an extravagance of expression . . . which reckoned little with the limits of good taste and tact. His language had a wild earthy flavor which . . . only the most rugged and inaccessible parts of the Southern Highlands could have produced. . . ."[35] Brownlow's style in the debate vindicated this judgment.

Abram Pryne

"To be candid," said Brownlow in the debate, "Mr. Pryne was never known beyond the smoke of his own chimney until I brought him into notice by accepting his challenge."[36] The remark was brutal, but essentially true. Detailed information concerning Pryne is meager. The Philadelphia debate was his major bid for national prominence. Only thirty-four when he faced the Parson,[37] he died, a suicide, in 1862.[38] Less flamboyant and vindictive than Brownlow, Pryne equaled him in the intensity of his convictions, religious and political. His hatred of slavery derived from fundamentalist religious beliefs and puritanical ideas of sin, conscience, and humanitarian duty.[39] A Garrisonian, demanding immediate and uncompensated emancipation, Pryne represented the very extremity of the antislavery crusade. An obituary described him as "a clergyman who felt that his duty to his Divine Master required that he should wage unrelenting war against the most gigantic crime of the age."[40] So strong were his feelings, he "became a monomaniac on the subject of human bondage."[41]

Pryne assisted the antislavery agitation centering in and about Syracuse, a city Webster termed "that laboratory of abolition, libel, and treason."[42]

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[33] Brownlow to Pryne and Pryne to Brownlow, Sept. 3, 1858 (*Debate*, pp. 15–16). For an account of Small's career and his speaking ability, see Manzer, pp. 11–14.

[34] Oliver P. Temple, *Notable Men of Tennessee from 1833 to 1875* (New York, 1912), p. 40; Tishler, pp. 39–40, 57–58.

[35] Coulter, pp. 50–51.

[36] *Debate*, p. 276. Pryne himself told the audience: "I come to you an unknown man, with no trumpet to announce me, no confident national reputation to inspire me with courage." (*ibid.*, p. 53)

[37] Newspapers reporting the debate consistently gave Pryne's age as thirty-six (*The New York Times*, Sept. 10, 1858), but records of Onandaga County, N.Y., reveal that he was born in 1824 (Richard N. Wright, President, Onandaga Hist. Assoc., to the writer, Sept. 11, 1957).

[38] New York *Tribune*, Sept. 25, 1862, photostatic copy from the Onandaga Hist. Assoc.

[39] For the relation of Puritanism to the antislavery movement, see Roy F. Nichols, *The Disruption of American Democracy* (New York, 1948), p. 30.

[40] New York *Tribune*, Sept. 25, 1862.

[41] William D. Murphy, *Biographical Sketches of the State Officers and Members of the Legislature of the State of New York in 1862 and 1863* (Albany, 1863), p. 222.

[42] Allan Nevins, *Ordeal of the Union* (New York, 1947), I, 389.

He was a protégé of Gerrit Smith, eccentric philanthropist, and a close associate of Frederick Douglass. In 1856, spurning the more moderate Republicans, Pryne founded his newspaper and campaigned for Smith, the presidential candidate of the Liberty party and the radical abolitionists. When Douglass defected to Frémont, Pryne called it "a sad blow to me."[43] Two years later, he was a leader in urging Smith to run for governor as a third-party candidate.[44] When the ticket was overwhelmed, Pryne termed it "disastrous," and told Smith, "My advocacy of your claims broke down my paper, leaving me 300 dollars in debt, and cost me more abuse and slander than everything else in my life history. . . ."[45] As a result, he received direct financial aid from Smith,[46] and he was named assistant editor for Douglass' *North Star,* a paper subsidized by Smith.[47] The extremism of Pryne's views was revealed by his attitude toward John Brown. Indeed, it is possible that at the time of the debate he was fully aware of the old man's intention to attack Harper's Ferry.[48] Certain it is that he assisted Brown in Kansas[49] and that he approved the raid. With Parker Pillsbury, he addressed a memorial rally in Rochester on Brown's execution day,[50] and he wrote that the old man's death "will yet draw all men unto him."[51] Even after the election of 1860, he was doubtful regarding Republican intentions toward slavery,[52] but it was as a Republican that he was elected to the state Assembly in 1861, the year before his death.[53]

In personality, Pryne differed markedly from Brownlow. "Kind-hearted," "modest," "sober," and "unassuming" are some of the terms applied to him.[54] Yet he matched the Parson in the tenacity with which he clung to his views and in the radical nature of those views. He did not speak for the North, for advocates of immediate emancipation comprised only a very tiny, if noisy, portion of northern sentiment; but he faithfully represented the extremism of the abolition tradition of Garrison, Sumner, Parker, and Phillips. In addition, he was "a man of considerable ability and great fluency as a speaker."[55] Truly, the doughty Parson "met a foeman worthy of his steel."[56]

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[43] Pryne to Gerrit Smith, Sept. 30, 1856, in Benjamin Quarles, *Frederick Douglass* (Washington, 1948), p. 162.

[44] Gerrit Smith to S. J. May, July 7, 1858, in Ralph V. Harlow, *Gerrit Smith* (New York, 1939), p. 377; see also Quarles, p. 164.

[45] Pryne to Smith, Feb. 3, 1859, in Harlow, p. 382.

[46] Pryne to Smith, July 24 and Dec. 17, 1860 (Gerrit Smith Miller Collection, Syracuse Univ. Library). Contents of letters cited from this collection were provided by Dr. Lester G. Wells, Rare Book Librarian and Archivist.

[47] Murphy, p. 223; see also Quarles, pp. 91–96; Manzer, pp. 23–25; and Pryne to Smith, July 1, 1860 (Smith MSS.).

[48] Smith and Douglass knew of Brown's intentions as early as February, 1858 (Allan Nevins, *The Emergence of Lincoln* [New York, 1950], II, 20). Pryne worked and was intimate with both, and may well have shared the secret. By the time of the debate Brown's plans were almost complete.

[49] During the debate Pryne said, "I am proud to say that before John Brown went to Kansas, I had the privilege, in an Anti-Slavery Convention at Syracuse, of moving a resolution to buy rifles for his 'boys' " (*Debate,* pp. 299–300).

[50] Wolf, p. 128.

[51] Pryne to Smith, July 1, 1860 (Smith MSS.).

[52] Pryne to Smith, Dec. 17, 1860 (Smith MSS.).

[53] Murphy, p. 223.

[54] Murphy, p. 224; *The New York Times,* Sept. 10, 1858; *National Anti-Slavery Standard,* Sept. 18, 1858.

THE DEBATE

Who Listened?

Sentiment regarding slavery in Philadelphia was mixed. The Quakers were among the first to oppose it, and they were responsible for keeping the antislavery movement alive in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. By 1850 the large German element provided significant additional support.[57] From 1838 to 1854 Philadelphia abolitionists published the *Pennsylvania Freeman;* and in the 1850s they formed the hard core of opinion which led the state legislature to adopt measures to thwart the Fugitive Slave Law and to declare that the Dred Scott decision had "no binding authority upon a free people."[58] Many Philadelphians, however, opposed abolition. Early agitation had been met, as elsewhere in the North, by riotous disorder.[59] By the 1850s abolitionists were no longer assaulted by mobs, but neither were they popular figures to a majority of citizens. Opposition to abolition was led by wealthy merchants, for "the business interests of Philadelphia . . . were bound up with the economic life of the cotton states."[60] With economic ties often buttressed by intermarriage with prominent southern families, many Quaker City merchants used their control of press and politics to prevent agitation on slavery. They found mass support among shopkeepers, mechanics, and laborers who harbored racial prejudice or who feared competition from freed Negroes.[61] Philadelphia politics, turbulent and chaotic in the 1850s, evinced these diverse views. In 1851 the city was Democratic; in 1854 the Americans, or Know-Nothings, elected the mayor; in 1856 the Democrats returned to power; and in 1858 the "People's party" elected a mayor "who would have been called a Republican in other states."[62]

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[55] Murphy, p. 223; see also *The New York Times,* Sept. 10, 1858.

[56] New York *Herald,* in the Philadelphia *Evening Bulletin,* Sept. 15, 1858.

[57] Nevins, *Ordeal of the Union,* II, 330; Russel B. Nye, *Fettered Freedom: Civil Liberties and the Slavery Controversy, 1830–1860* (East Lansing, Mich., 1949), p. 241.

[58] Nye, pp. 201–202, 210–212, 214.

[59] In 1838 Pennsylvania Hall was burned to the ground by a mob, infuriated by a meeting there of the Female Anti-Slavery Society (Nye, pp. 166–167). A year later another mob destroyed the possessions of Benjamin Lundy (Wolf, p. 14).

[60] Cole, p. 279. Businessmen of the city provided capital, ships, and even port facilities for the clandestine slave trade which flourished in the 1850s. See Philip S. Foner, *Business and Slavery* (Chapel Hill, N.C., 1941), pp. 164–168.

[61] Nevins, *Ordeal of the Union,* II, 330.

[62] Nichols, p. 204. For accounts of Philadelphia politics in the 1850s, see *ibid.,* pp. 47, 203, 219–220; Foner, pp. 75, 88; Overdyke, pp. 5, 12–14; Nevins, *Ordeal of the Union,* II, 126, 327–330, 342.

Reflecting the city's politics, the auditors of the debate were about equally divided on the issue under discussion.[63] Two facts support this conclusion. Both men were given good receptions each evening,[64] and newspapers gave conflicting accounts of audience opinion. The *North American*, a paper opposed to slavery, felt that the auditors displayed "a strong Southern bias."[65] But the *Pennsylvanian*, bitterly antiabolitionist, found that "abolitionists outnumbered the decent portion three to one."[66] The *Evening Bulletin*, the paper with the fullest and most careful reports, declared: "All shades of political opinion were represented, from the fiercest of the 'fierce Democracie' to the darkest shades of Republicanism and the most 'native American,' red, white, and blue."[67]

But if the audience was relatively impartial, it was also disappointingly small. National Guard's Hall would accommodate two thousand, but no more than four to five hundred attended on the first night.[68] There was some improvement on subsequent evenings,[69] but one observer who attended each night estimated the largest crowd at seven hundred.[70] Much larger audiences–social, cultural, political–were common in Philadelphia, so it must be agreed that "the audience was small–much smaller than the importance of the occasion and the reputations of the speakers would seem to warrant."[71] Several factors were probably responsible. First, as one reporter suggested, the fee of twenty-five cents each evening, or seventy-five cents for the series, may have discouraged some.[72] Second, many may have found little attraction in the speakers themselves. Pryne was unknown and Brownlow's proclivity for fanatical vituperation was well known.[73] Third, publicity, arranged entirely by the disputants, was inadequate. The first newspaper advertisement appeared September 4.[74] Three other papers carried the notice on September 6, the day before the debate began;[75] there was no advertising in other leading journals.[76] Only one paper promoted the debate in its editorial columns, and this on the day the debate opened.[77] Handbills and posters were employed, but such advertising could not have been extensive.[78] Fourth, and possibly most important, the debate promised to feature extremist views, and many citizens may have lacked enthusiasm for a weary repetition of ideas to which they had been subjected, over and over, through the years. Quite likely, by 1858 most Philadelphians had developed fixed opinions about slavery. Their turbulent politics, far from indicating vacillation on the issue, reflected their uneasy attempts to find a solution and maintain the Union.

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[63] In this respect they confirmed Pryne's judgment when he assured Brownlow that "you will be as free from prejudice from a Philadelphia audience as myself" (Pryne to Brownlow, June 18, 1858 [*Debate*, p. 14]).

[64] Philadelphia *Press*, Sept. 8, 9, 10, 1858; Philadelphia *Evening Bulletin*, Sept. 8, 9, 11, 13, 1858; Philadelphia *North American and United States Gazette*, Sept. 8, 1858; *The New York Times*, Sept. 10, 1858.

[65] Sept. 8, 1858.

[66] Sept. 13, 1858, in Coulter, p. 100. This judgment was confirmed by Brownlow who declared: "The South has been well represented in this Hall . . . although three or four to one . . . are against us." (*Debate*, p. 140)

[67] Sept. 8, 1858. After the second evening this paper noted: "The sentiment of the audience, so far, appears to be nearly equally divided . . . that is, the entire house laughs at the fun on both sides, but at one of the Parson's strong points his supporters only applaud, and at one of Mr. Pryne's keen assaults only his friends cheer." (Sept. 9, 1858)

[68] One reporter estimated the audience to be four hundred (Philadelphia *North American and United States Gazette*, Sept. 8, 1858). A second put the number at five hundred (Philadelphia *Public Ledger*, Sept. 8, 1858). A third thought it fell between four and five hundred (Philadelphia *Evening Bulletin*, Sept. 8, 1858).

[69] The Philadelphia *Press*, Sept. 9, 1858, thought the second night's audience "a slight improvement upon the first's." After the third night, *The New York Times* (Sept. 10, 1858) declared: "The interest in these debates is growing."

[70] *National Anti-Slavery Standard*, Sept. 18, 1858.

[71] Philadelphia *Press*, Sept. 8, 1858.

[72] *National Anti-Slavery Standard*, Sept. 18, 1858.

[73] The reporter for the *National Anti-Slavery Standard*, hardly an unbiased source,

The audience, however small, provided the debaters with several advantages. One observer found it "one of the most attractive we have ever seen, the strictest silence being preserved, except when broken by applause."[79] Further, it was largely continuous in that many persons attended each of the five evenings.[80] But, despite Pryne's insistence that Negroes be admitted, only six or seven attended;[81] and very few ladies, twenty at most, were present. They supported Pryne, for they were of " 'Friendly' appearance."[82]

Speech Texts

Texts of speeches analyzed in this paper are those found in the volume published by Pryne and Brownlow. The Parson declared: ". . . I propose to put in a book, all that I say, and *just as I say it.*"[83] Pryne agreed, suggesting that verbatim reporters be employed.[84] Extensive quotations from the speeches appeared in some Philadelphia newspapers, and a comparison of

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declared that attendance was poor because of "the invincible loathing which was felt by the people toward the ruffian Brownlow" (Sept. 18, 1858).

[74] Philadelphia *Evening Bulletin.* The notice was repeated on Sept. 6.

[75] Philadelphia *North American and United States Gazette,* Philadelphia *Press,* and Philadelphia *Daily News.*

[76] Philadelphia *Public Ledger;* Philadelphia *Sunday Dispatch.*

[77] Philadelphia *Evening Bulletin,* Sept. 7, 1858. In urging attendance, this paper said: "We can assure our readers that it will be far from dry or uninteresting and that all who attend cannot fail to acquire a great amount of information. It is long since Philadelphia has seen a public debate with more promise."

[78] See Pryne's statement in Syracuse *Standard,* in the *National Anti-Slavery Standard,* Oct. 16, 1858.

[79] Philadelphia *North American and United States Gazette,* Sept. 8, 1858. Similar observations were recorded by other local newspapers.

[80] Those present the last evening were described as persons "whose faces have grown familiar since Tuesday night" (Philadelphia *Evening Bulletin,* Sept. 13, 1858). Similar statements were made by other reporters.

[81] Philadelphia *Press,* Sept. 9, 1858; Philadelphia *Evening Bulletin,* Sept. 13, 1858.

[82] Philadelphia *Evening Bulletin,* Sept. 13, 1858.

[83] Brownlow to Pryne, May 15, 1858 (*Debate,* p. 10). His intention was reaffirmed in a second letter, June 10, 1858 (*ibid.,* p. 12).

[84] Pryne to Brownlow, June 1, 1858 (*Debate,* p. 11). Pryne employed Mr. DeWolf Brown of Philadelphia to record his words (*ibid.,* p. 52, *n.*).

these passages with the published book reveals few divergences.[85] On this evidence, the texts as printed have been taken as the best available and as sufficiently accurate for rhetorical analysis.

The Arguments

During the five evenings, both Pryne and Brownlow frequently returned to previously advanced arguments for further elaboration or refutation. Brownlow's first speech, for example, was essentially a recapitulation, often verbatim, of his sermon which had been so well received in Knoxville. Since this address summarized his position on slavery, any further argument was of necessity somewhat redundant. Moreover, some issues, for example, those relating to the Bible, pervaded the entire discussion. For these reasons a chronological account and analysis of the debate would be lengthy, repetitive, and even confusing. Major topics, therefore, with relevant arguments consolidated under them, have been taken as the bases for evaluation in this study.

THE BIBLE. The major portion of the debate was addressed to the question: Does the Bible sanction or condemn slavery? With two divines as disputants such emphasis could be expected; but the rule of Scripture would have been an issue in any debate. Human bondage posed a moral question, and the Bible and religion were the essential sources of moral precept. "Protestantism," the term employed by Nichols to describe the religious concepts of American society in the 1850s, held that right and wrong were absolutes, that the righteous had the duty, never to be shirked, of combating sin, and that there were heavenly rewards for those who fought evil.[86] The duty of eradicating sin and condemning sinners was felt no less deeply in the South than in the North.[87] If God condemned slavery, a true Christian of the North could not rest until the sin had been extirpated; but if He sanctioned it, southern Christians had a duty, equally solemn, to silence the wicked abolitionists. Both sides avidly searched Scripture for evidences of divine approbation. Abolition always had been basically religious in origin, method, and appeal,[88] and "the Scriptural defense of slavery . . . probably attained the most elaborate and systematic statement of any of the types of proslavery theory."[89]

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[85] The only major difference between the published texts and newspaper accounts relates to the second evening when Brownlow's address was very lengthy. As it neared the time limit, his reader was twice interrupted by cries of "Time!" In both instances Pryne intervened and asked indulgence for the Parson (Philadelphia *Evening Bulletin*, Sept. 9, 1858; Philadelphia *North American and United States Gazette*, Sept. 9, 1858). Omission of these incidents shows that parts of the verbatim records were edited, but changes were slight.

[86] For the impact of the "Protestant attitude" upon American thought and behavior, see Nichols, pp. 21–23.

[87] Nichols, p. 21; Nevins, *Ordeal of the Union*, I, 58; Avery Craven, *The Coming of the Civil War* (New York, 1942), p. 13.

[88] See Gilbert H. Barnes, *The Anti-Slavery Impulse, 1830–1844* (New York, 1933), Chs. I–X; James T. Adams, *America's Tragedy* (New York, 1934), pp. 10–12; Dwight Dumond, *Anti-Slavery Origins of the Civil War in the United States* (Ann Arbor, Mich., 1939), pp. 35–40; Craven, pp. 10–13; Nye, pp. 4–5.

Brownlow launched a Biblical defense the first evening by announcing that human bondage arose and "exists now *by and with the consent, knowledge, and approbation of Almighty God*" (p. 21).[90] Slaveholders are only performing their Christian duty, whereas "fiery bigots at the North . . . are not following the dictates of God's spirit or law" (p. 23). Taking the traditional southern stand, the Parson insisted that the church should not involve itself in political affairs. Christ had accepted Roman law, he contended, and all great church leaders—Luther, Calvin, Wesley—had accepted the existing laws of their nations (pp. 23–28). Specific instances cited by Brownlow were impressive. Abraham held slaves; Moses legalized slavery in the Tenth Commandment; the ancient Jews were authorized to purchase "bond-men forever"; Hagar, Sarah's maid, was returned to her mistress by the Angel of God "acting in the capacity of a *United States Marshal* under the then existing fugitive slave laws";[91] Saul owned Ziba; St. Paul sent Onesimus, a runaway slave, back to his master; the New Testament enjoined servants to be faithful to their masters; and, finally, Christ never condemned slavery, which flourished all about Him in its worst forms (pp. 22–23, 28–29, 72–92, 208–212, 254–258). Not until the fourth evening did Brownlow resort to the "Curse of Canaan" argument, "the ultimate basis on which the religious element of the South justified slavery."[92] Negroes, the argument ran, were the descendants of Ham and, hence, doomed to perpetual bondage. Ham had married into the race of Cain, whose " 'mark' was a black skin," and Noah had said, "Cursed be Canaan; a servant of servants shall he be unto his brethren" (pp. 203–204). All in all, Brownlow's Biblical defense was his most complete statement of any of the proslave theories developed by the South.[93]

Pryne at once admitted the importance of the Biblical argument, saying, "If I am unable to meet it, and meet it successfully, I shall give up my opposition to the institution of slavery" (p. 73). Consistent with abolitionist tradition, he argued both from the spirit of the Bible and also from specific passages.[94] Slavery began with kidnaping in Africa, but what of the injunction "Thou shalt not steal"? Would God sanction the disruption of marriages

[89] William S. Jenkins, *Pro-Slavery Thought in the Old South* (Chapel Hill, N.C., 1935), pp. 200–201. On the importance of "the Bible argument" to the South, see *ibid.*, pp. 206–207; Craven, p. 15; Nichols, pp. 35–36, 135–136.

[90] Page references in parentheses refer to the text of the speeches as given in the volume published by Pryne and Brownlow. This volume has been cited in previous notes as *Debate*.

[91] Coulter (p. 102) declares that Brownlow made this declaration "at peril of having his audience charge that he was crazy. . . ."

[92] Jenkins, p, 204.

[93] Manzer (pp. 40–41) suggests that Brownlow's arguments were less thorough and forceful than other arguments based on the Bible advanced by the South. For detailed statements of the scriptural defense of slavery, see Jenkins, pp. 200–227; Hesseltine, p. 231.

[94] See Jenkins, pp. 218–220.

or the robbing of laborers of their wages? Would he condone enslavement of men made in His own image (pp. 117–118)? Even if there were a curse on Canaan and even if it could be shown that God approved it (pp. 119–120), "let me ask who made the South the executors of Noah to carry out his curse? . . . Even did I admit (which I do not) that Noah's curse had some force in enslaving somebody to the Jews, what a jump in logic to conclude that Southern men have a right to enslave negroes" (p. 120). Abraham's "servants" were not slaves; they carried arms, owned property, and had "servants" themselves (pp. 120–123, 131). Ancient servitude was quite unlike the American system (pp. 123–124), and the mere fact of its existence was no proof of divine approval. Polygamy also existed, but would it be sanctioned by God today (p. 123)? St. Paul, Pryne admitted, did return Onesimus to his master, but he said: "Receive him not now as a servant; receive him as myself" (pp. 130–131). To the Parson's contention that Christ never condemned slavery, Pryne replied: "This argument is based upon the assumption that everything that Christ did not denounce in set terms is innocent." Christ did not denounce the gladiatorial spectacles of Rome; did He, therefore, approve them (pp. 132–133)? Displaying excellent logic, the abolitionist argued: "Christ did not resist his own crucifixion; and if nothing but what Christ resisted is wrong, then Christ's crucifixion was not wrong" (pp. 126–127). Twenty passages were cited to show that the Bible opposed slavery (pp. 133–134). Pryne's mode of argument, his depth of feeling, and his castigation of the South are shown by the following typical passage:

> Do you ask me to believe for an instant that Jesus as He looks down from heaven tonight over the broad expanse of the South—as His ear catches the piteous cry of the babe bereft of a mother's care, because that mother is under the lash—as He hears the deep groan of the poor slave who, on his hard couch, is mourning the bitterness of oppression—as He listens to the shrieks of maidens, writhing under the whip, because they will not submit to lust—do you ask me to believe that our glorious Saviour, as His view takes in this whole scene of brutality, and outrage, and cruelty, is not only indifferent to its horrors, but even throws the shield of Divine sanction over a hell on the face of God's earth? (pp. 240–241).

Arguing from the golden rule, a usual abolitionist method, Pryne applied it to Brownlow: "And would he that men should doom *him* to a life of bondage; that they should sell *his* wife on the auction block; and *his* daughters to a slave trader? . . . Why, then, do this to others, and still claim to be a servant, nay, a minister, of Christ?" (p. 128).

After an inconclusive exchange as to whether the Hebrew and Greek words translated as "servant" also meant "slave" (pp. 29, 122–123, 168–169, 209–210),[95] Pryne touched off an explosive subissue when he asked, "If slavery and the Bible are so entirely in affinity," why not let slaves read it? The truth is, he charged, that "American slavery is so terribly inimical to the whole Bible that the South is thrown into an agony of fear the moment a half-dozen, poor, ragged slaves gather . . . in order to be taught the language of the New Testament" (p. 125). The charge was essentially true,[96] a fact which may have accounted for the vehemence of the Parson's reply. He maintained that two schools existed in Knoxville alone wherein slaves were taught to read the Bible and that all over the South, "by hundreds and thousands," slaves "are flocking into the Church" (pp. 165–166). Completely indignant, he declared that when it came to Bible reading and religion the North opened "a wider and more inviting field . . . for honest, faithful, evangelical missionary labors" than all of Asia or Africa (pp. 166–167). He called for a new missionary society, for "Christian masters and slaves of the glorious South cannot remain guiltless, in a coming day, if they fold their arms and look idly on at the heart-sickening spectacle now presented by—not their brethren—but their *fellow-creatures* of the North, and do nothing to turn them from their abominations" (pp. 167–168). He would style his organization "the Missionary Society of the South, for the Conversion of Freedom-Shriekers, Spiritualists, Free-Lovers, Fourierites, and Infidel Reformers of the North" (p. 167). His tirade was colorful, even humorous, but it failed to answer Pryne's argument. It represented the hostility aroused in the South, albeit exaggerated by Brownlow's fanaticism, by an honest exposure of an evil of slavery.

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[95] *The New York Times* thought this question became "the strong point of difference between the debaters. . . ." (Sept. 11, 1858). For accounts of this linguistic controversy and its significance, see Craven, pp. 162–163; Jenkins, p. 219.

"The Bible argument," said Dumond of the entire slavery controversy, "waxed long and furiously, with perhaps a slight advantage to the abolitionists. Over the long view it appears to have been a rather fruitless discussion . . ."[97] His evaluation fits the Philadelphia debate. Pryne seems to have had the better of the argument, but it is doubtful whether he or the Parson was able to win adherents by this mode of reasoning. Certainly resort to scriptural injunction did little to solve the problem. The Biblical argument, rather, widened the breach by strengthening stern dictates of duty, in North and South, for if "exhorters could invoke the moral law, they could count on a sentimental response capable of intense opposition to reputed evil."[98]

THE SLAVE TRADE. Argument regarding the slave trade did not accurately reflect proslavery theory or feeling in the 1850s. At the outset Brownlow condemned it as "that vile traffic" (pp. 30–32), and held the North responsible for it: "The states of this Union . . . commonly called the New England States, alias the *Free States,* were never, to any great extent, *slaveholding.* No Sir-ee, their virtuous and pious minds were chiefly exercized in *slave-stealing* and *slave-selling.* . . . To the pious, God-fearing, liberty-loving

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[96] By the 1850s most slave states had laws, however ineffectually enforced, prohibiting the teaching of slaves to read and write (Jenkins, p. 212).

[97] Dumond, p. 45.

[98] Nichols, p. 23.

New England States, are we of the South wholly indebted for our slaves! They *stole* the African from his native land, and sold him into bondage for the sake of gain" (pp. 32–33). The Parson praised southern men who opposed resumption of the trade (pp. 31–32), and railed against Northerners who even yet illegally engaged in it (pp. 33–34). This argument of entailment echoed earlier days when the South was apologetic for slavery;[99] but by the 1850s, with the "positive good" theory dominant, many slaveholders defended the trade and even favored resumption.[100]

Pryne anticipated a defense of the trade, for he, too, delivered an attack upon it (pp. 53–73). He was quick, however, and with good effect, to point up the Parson's error. "Morality has no geographical limits," he argued. "If the slave trade is wrong on the coast of Africa, it is wrong in America" (p. 58). When Brownlow later maintained that the trade was sanctioned in the Bible (p. 81), Pryne pounced upon the inconsistency: "Which end of the argument shall I take? . . . I have driven him . . . to plant his feet on the slave trade. . . . He has amended his logic" (p. 135). Brownlow denied any inconsistency (p. 169), but on the fourth night he declared the trade "a blessing, instead of a curse, to the African race" (p. 205). Pryne had won a clear victory, one which demonstrated that slaveholders could not cope with tough-minded abolitionists by standing upon middle ground.

STATUS OF NEGROES, SLAVE AND FREE. "I repudiate, as ridiculously absurd, that much lauded, but nowhere accredited, dogma of Thomas Jefferson's, that 'all men are created equal.' God never intended to make the negro the equal of the white man, either morally, mentally, or physically" (p. 43). With these words Brownlow voiced a fundamental southern view. The "natural rights" concepts of the Revolution, a thorn to proslavery theorists, had been replaced by the doctrine of "classified equality among equals." According to this view, if Negroes could be shown to be inferior, the rights of whites could not be claimed for slaves, and considerable Southern effort was expended to prove such inferiority.[101] The Parson touched but lightly upon the elaborate evidence developed by Southern scientists (pp. 213–214), but he amassed considerable evidence from contemporary events. The barbarism of Africa (pp. 98–99), the low state of free Negroes in northern cities and in Canada (pp. 43–44, 46), and the "poverty, indolence, immorality, and criminality" of former slaves in Jamaica (pp. 47–48, 50) were all cited. He was most adroit in utilizing abolitionist sources decrying the slow progress of freed Negroes (pp. 102–108); with telling effect he read a letter by Gerrit Smith, Pryne's mentor, complaining that Negroes to whom he had given farms were so "idle, worthless, and vicious" that most had sold their lands or had lost them for taxes (p. 46). Conversely, he upheld the benefits of slavery, which "has tamed, civilized, Christianized . . . the brutal negroes . . ." (p. 101). Thousands of slaves were in the church, and so happy were they that most would refuse freedom if it were offered, and many returned voluntarily to bondage (pp. 96–102). Anticipating charges of torture and cruelty by slaveholders, Brownlow noted that every Southern state had laws protecting slaves, that some masters and overseers had been executed for unprovoked murders, and that during more than fifty years in the South he had "never seen a negro whipped, hanged, or burned at the stake" (pp. 24, 80–81, 92–98). Northern concern over treatment of slaves, said Brownlow, was hypocritical. Abolitionists, he said, "seek their own—not the negro's—good" (p. 41). He noted, with scorn, that Negroes in the North often could not vote, were denied respectable employment, and were subjected to rigid segregation (pp. 44–45). Significantly, Brownlow did not attempt to show that slaves fared better than free labor in the North, a major proslavery contention in the 1850s.[102] Here, again, was evidence that the Parson was not the ideal spokesman for the aristocratic South. Most white men in East Tennessee earned their living by hard work. Brownlow could not attack free labor and remain true to an ideal, which he shared, of the southern highlands.[103]

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[99] Jenkins, pp. 33–35.

[100] Jenkins, pp. 95–103; Hesseltine, pp. 347–348; Nye, p. 231.

[101] For discussions of southern arguments designed to show inferiority of Negroes, see Jenkins, pp. 39–40, 137–139, 243–246; Nye, pp. 186–188.

Pryne made no direct issue of the treatment of slaves. He opposed slavery, not because it was harsh, but because "the very condition itself, in its happiest forms, "denied freedom and personality to slaves" (pp. 136–138, 292). His failure to dwell upon cruelty reflected a significant gain for abolitionist propaganda. The depravity and cruelty of the system had been a major argument of antislavery speakers,[104] but by the late 1850s, after years of agitation and the appearance of *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, the essential cruelty of slavery was an accepted truth to most Northerners. But if Pryne made no formal argument, Brownlow's extensive treatment was justified, for his opponent's language abounded with references to "Lords of the Lash," "men rendered mute by chains," "wholesale adultery," "robbers of cradles," "violators of wives," "maimers of men," and "whippers of women." No effort was made to substantiate these contentions with evidence, but proof was probably not needed for a Philadelphia audience.[105] Brownlow was correct when he held that abolitionists exaggerated cruelty,[106] but he made no response to Pryne's condemnation of the absolute power which masters wielded over their slaves. To this "there was no effective reply . . . nor could there have been."[107]

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[102] Jenkins, pp. 40, 296–298; Adams, p. 61; Nye, p. 243; Hesseltine, pp, 230, 346.

[103] When aristocratic planters advanced the idea that manual labor was too menial for white men and fit only for slaves, Brownlow, in his newspaper, told them how mistaken they were (Knoxville *Whig*, June 19, 1852, in Coulter, p. 92).

[104] Dumond, pp. 37–38; Adams, p. 117.

[105] Only one specific incident became an issue. Pryne referred to a master who chained his slave to a wagon while he was "gone to the communion table" (p. 138). Brownlow hotly denied the charge (p. 169), and later reported that he had sent a southern medical student to Pryne's room to ascertain the source of the story. Pryne admitted, Brownlow claimed, that his source was a Mr. Henry Cherry. The Parson then castigated Cherry as an abolitionist, a student of Beecher's, a man dismissed from the church for drunkenness, and a man who skipped Thomasville, Ga., owing more than two thousand dollars (pp. 278–279). Pryne replied, giving no names, that he had been told of the incident by a Presbyterian Deacon in Syracuse (pp. 295–296).

The sad plight of free Negroes, argued Pryne, does not prove them an inferior race, for ". . . the vices of the slave have been learned on the plantation, and . . . no people can be expected to rise in a moment from . . . such horrid education" (pp. 128–129). If Africa was a backward land, slavery there had made it so (pp. 239–240), and if slaves were so happy with their lot, why was the South so fearful they would run away (p. 139)? Further, Pryne found the Parson inconsistent: "We have it affirmed that it is only by slavery that the character of the slave can be elevated. Yet we are also told that, after two hundred years of slavery, he is so immoral and thriftless that he cannot care for himself" (pp. 138–139). In contrast, Pryne made little effort to show that Negroes were equal intellectually to whites. Perhaps he felt the point so obvious, since the Negro bore "the Divine Image" (p. 118), as to be above argument; or perhaps he was aware that most Northerners, even antislavery men, were as convinced as the South that Negroes were inferior.[108] He did say that Frederick Douglass or Samuel R. Ward would be better than himself in refuting Brownlow's errors (p. 129).

Pryne's last remark drew a withering retort from the Parson[109] and afforded him a dramatic opportunity to advance a contention vital to his case and to the South, the issue of racial amalgamation. Said the Parson, "As he holds these two free negroes in such high esteem . . . as they have sons and Mr. Pryne says he has a little daughter–would he be willing to see her united in matrimony with these *buck negroes?* Answer the question . . . Show your *faith* by your *works* . . ." (p. 170). The question echoed a deep southern fear that the end of slavery would bring inevitable amalgamation. This fear was especially felt by small farmers and mountain folk who were, for the most part, nonslaveholding.[110] Southern fears were revealed by Brownlow's frequent references to the problem (pp. 109, 204, 217, 252, 256, 275–276). Pryne refused a direct reply to Brownlow's question. He did say that his daughter would spurn any "lordly stripling of the lash," with the words of Whittier's poem, "The Yankee Girl" (pp. 221–222). He was undoubtedly justified in avoiding personal involvement, but his refusal to discuss the problem in a general way at once reflected accepted abolitionist doctrine[111] and revealed a fundamental weakness of that position. Most abolitionists sought only immediate emancipation. They gave little thought to nor advocated any plan for the problems of racial tension and adjustment which would inevitably arise. They seemed to feel that slaves could achieve, in one step, the status of freemen and that they could be readily accepted as such by Southerners. The view was entirely unrealistic and, as a result, abolitionists would have to accept "a fearful responsibility before history."[112]

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[106] Hesseltine, pp. 214–215.

[107] Dumond, p. 42.

[108] Dumond, pp. 51–53; Nye, p. 185.

[109] Said Brownlow, "The assertion by Mr. Pryne that Frederick Douglass and Sam Ward are intellectually *his* superiors, I do not doubt. . . . But I do not think that it follows, as a matter of course, that they are giants in intellect. They may be intellectually his superiors and still be moderate men" (p. 170).

[110] "Slavery solved the race problem, and so if there must be Negroes in his midst, the Southern mountaineer was just as eager to maintain slavery for protection as the Southern planter was for profit." (Coulter, p. 109); see also Nye, p. 21.

ECONOMICS OF SLAVERY. Was slavery profitable? On this question Pryne took the attack: "I shall prove . . . that American slavery . . . desolates the fair soil of the South . . . and impoverishes the whole country over which it spreads" (p. 176). His evidence, as he acknowledged (p. 195), was drawn primarily from Helper's famous volume,[113] and his argument was impressive. The South contained one hundred and fifty million more acres than the North, but it held nearly four million fewer people. The average value of land in the North was four times greater than in the South, the difference amounting to twelve billion dollars. Northern agriculture, measured in yield per acre, markedly exceeded the South's for oats, rye, corn, and potatoes. In fact, the value of the Northern hay crop alone was greater than the combined value of southern cotton, tobacco, rice, hemp, and sugar. All this showed that slave labor, lacking initiative and training, was unproductive. Total wealth of the North exceeded four billion dollars; the Southern total was less than three billion. Measured both as to tonnage and value, the North exported and imported more than the South, and southern exports were carried in northern ships. Free states had four times as much capital invested and produced eight times more manufactures than slave states. The North had three times more mileage and five times as much money invested in railroads. The North used the Post Office more, had more children in school, and had twenty-fold more libraries and books—all because one-half of the southern population was illiterate. "What makes the difference?" demanded Pryne. "What but the incubus of slavery?" (pp. 176–192).

Brownlow joined the issue with statistics of his own. The South had suffered only one-fourth of the business failures in the Panic of 1857; and the per-capita wealth of the South, "including white and colored," was twice that of the North (pp. 151–153). Pryne's statistics, he charged, were worthless, for the value of the slaves themselves, amounting to nearly two billion dollars, had been ignored (p. 264). He sang the praises of southern resources —"immense lines of railroads and canals," greater coastal mileage, magnificent harbor sites, rich soil, increasing manufactures, and "exhaustless" deposits of coal, iron, copper, lead, and zinc (pp. 260–266). Moreover, he claimed, northern industry and commerce were completely dependent upon southern production, a fact which the North would appreciate with sorrow as the growing economic boycott of northern trade, caused by the ceaseless agitation against slavery, gained more momentum (pp. 259–260). Without cotton, armies could not march and industrial cities would decay. "With us in the South," the Parson cried, " 'Cotton is King!' and in the language of Professor De Bow, 'It is the cotton bale that makes the treaties of the world, and binds over the nations to keep the peace' " (p. 263). Pryne found Brownlow's argument largely irrelevant, for "he did not, step by step, give the Northern balance . . ." (p. 290). The South had great resources, he admitted, but what of development (pp. 183, 289–290)? He laughed at Brownlow for "shaking his poor, lean Southern purse at us," and referred to the "large number" of planters "in Philadelphia tonight" bent upon purchasing northern goods (pp. 296–297).

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[111] The Philadelphia correspondent for the *National Anti-Slavery Standard*, for example, termed Pryne's retort "one of the best things said" and "a well administered rebuke" (Sept. 18, 1858).

[112] Nevins, *Emergence of Lincoln*, I, 345; see also Barnes, pp. 101–103, 109. Manzer (pp. 46, 49–50) feels that Brownlow did not capitalize enough on this weakness.

[113] Hinton R. Helper, *The Impending Crisis of the South* (New York, 1857).

Pryne's economic arguments were telling. One newspaper said, "Our report gives no idea of the crushing force of Mr. Pryne's statistics. . . . He closed . . . amid round after round of the most enthusiastic applause."[114] Part of the force of Helper's statistics resulted from his careful selection of products and states for comparison, but his over-all conclusion was irresistible.[115] Brownlow was correct when he pointed to the dependency of northern manufacturing, especially textiles, upon southern products, a factor which made the threat of boycott effective in bringing northern businessmen to support southern views. But slavery kept the South agricultural. Too much of its wealth was tied up in "property of persons,"[116] and the outcome of the Civil War was due primarily to northern economic superiority. Pryne spoke truth and won a clear advantage on the economic issue.[117]

LEGALITY OF SLAVERY. Since the Constitution, Congressional enactments, and court decisions seemed to sanction slavery, abolitionists were confronted with serious legal obstacles. Most sought justification for emancipation within existing legal processes. Others, primarily Garrisonians, concluded that the Constitution was a proslavery document and, hence, "a covenant with death and an agreement with hell."[118] They evolved the concept of "the higher law," a doctrine which placed "natural rights" and "laws of God" above mere human enactments, and they were ready, if need be, to resort to nullification and even disunion to achieve their cherished end.[119] Pryne managed to defend both positions. His main contention was that slavery was illegal, but he pled "the higher law" when hard pressed.

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[114] Philadelphia *North American and United States Gazette*, Sept. 10, 1858. Other local papers also reported this response.

[115] Hesseltine, p. 362; Jenkins, p. 93.

[116] Nevins, *Ordeal of the Union*, I, 493.

[117] Manzer (p. 48) found Brownlow's arguments "almost defensive" and Pryne's "perhaps his best of the entire debate."

[118] Nye, p. 188; Jenkins, p. 160; Adams, p. 117.

[119] Nye, pp. 192–195.

"According to all just notions of human law," declared Pryne, "there never was and never can be a slave legally held on the American continent" (p. 60). First, slavery had never been enacted into law.[120] Second, even if slavery were specifically enacted, it could not be legal, for laws, to be legal, must be moral. Authorities from Cicero to Blackstone were cited. Third, slaves held in the colonies were expressly freed in 1772, four years before the Revolution, by a ruling of an English court.[121] Fourth, slavery was at variance with the natural rights tenets of the Declaration of Independence. Fifth, anticipating a typical southern approach to "natural rights," the mere existence of slavery in history did not prove it legal. Sixth, slavery was inconsistent with the spirit of the Constitution, especially the Preamble, which must be considered a part of the document (pp. 60–72). Later, Pryne returned to the Constitution to argue that it contained provisions which made slavery illegal and specific powers enabling Congress to abolish it. Referring to the "due process" clause, he held that slaves were deprived of life, liberty, and property without jury trials and that they were denied all civil rights, including habeas corpus. "Carry out this clause of the Constitution . . ." he cried, "and it will sweep American slavery from the nation" (pp. 225–226). Moreover, he argued, slavery was incompatible with the republican form of government guaranteed to each state. Such government must derive its powers from the consent of the governed, and slaves have never given consent to the powers exercised over them by southern states. Congress could abolish slavery, therefore, by invoking the guaranty clause (pp. 229–230).[122]

Brownlow's legal defense of slavery accorded with traditional southern views. The slaveholder confronted a formidable task in reconciling slavery with highly valued natural rights concepts of the Revolution. He tried to resolve the issue by deprecating abstract theory and by deriving, rather, a basis for natural rights from history. Invoking the pragmatism of Burke, the South held that inequality of ability and status was as old as man himself and that servitude, therefore, was "natural."[123] Much of the subtlety of the South's cogent, close-reasoned, and elaborate defense was absent from the Parson's argument, but his basic position coincided with views developed by the best legal minds of the slave states. Slavery was "natural," he asserted, because it had always existed: "The world, when first peopled by God himself, was not a world of *freemen,* but of SLAVES [sic]—the Declaration of Independence, as usually construed, to the contrary notwithstanding" (p. 20). He marshaled his evidence from history—Biblical, ancient, medieval, and modern (pp. 20–21, 201–203). Later he claimed that most modern nations had specific statutes authorizing slavery and that, fifty years after the Somerset case, Judge Stowell had upheld the right to own slaves under English common law (pp. 196–197).[124] To show the constitutionality of slavery, the Parson was content to cite only the Dred Scott decision (pp. 197–198). Finally, he claimed that the Founding Fathers, by word or deed, favored and protected slavery. Washington, Franklin, John Adams, Rufus King, Hamilton, Jefferson, Madison, and Monroe were cited (pp. 199–201).

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[120] Manzer (p. 44) states that most southern states did have laws establishing slavery, and criticizes Brownlow for failing to cite them.

[121] Pryne here referred to the famous Somerset Case, presided over by Lord Mansfield, and a source of contention in almost every slavery controversy. Since the American states had inherited English common law, the decision had significant implications for slaveholders as well as for abolitionists. See Jenkins, p. 141.

[122] It should be noted that the argument relative to the guaranty clause was a recent weapon in the abolitionist arsenal. Although the South felt generally secure in regard to the legal status of slavery and the inability of Congress to abolish it, this argument worried prominent Southern leaders. See Jenkins, pp. 178–189.

[123] For an account of the southern arguments, see Jenkins, pp. 34, 40–41, 64, 134–135, 290–293.

The status of slavery under law was a vital issue—one which would rend the nation—yet the debaters devoted little time to refutation of opposing arguments. Brownlow was especially lax. He ignored Pryne's contentions almost entirely, using humor to refute only two minor points (pp. 112–113, 274–275). Pryne, too, failed to join the issue in any fundamental way. To Brownlow's historical justification, he replied: "He tells us that slavery has always existed. . . . So murder has always existed. But does that make it right?" (p. 73). He declared Brownlow inconsistent for pointing to the savagery of Africa and also for citing African customs as precedents for slavery (p. 74). He found the Founding Fathers—Pinckney, Madison, Randolph, Henry, Washington, Jefferson, Monroe, and Franklin—to have been opposed to slavery (pp. 227–228, 233–237, 287–288, 291). He flatly denied any right to hold men as property, adding "some things cannot be made plain by argument, and the right to self-ownership is an axiom" (pp. 232–233). Pryne may have sensed the uncompromising difference which divided North and South in regard to concepts of law and the Constitution. Sectional interpretations, developed over the years, had become so divergent as to be irreconcilable.[125] The Brownlow-Pryne debate was a case in point.

FUGITIVE SLAVES. An unavoidable issue centered on the Fugitive Slave Law, part of the Compromise of 1850. The South was adamant in demanding that the law be enforced. Operation of the "underground railroad" and interference, by mob violence and legislative act, with enforcement of the law inspired anger, suspicion, and defiance in the South. Conversely, attempts by southern sheriffs and federal officers to recapture runaways on free soil were effectively exploited by abolitionists as concrete instances of the evils of slavery.[126] Brownlow voiced the deep feeling of his section through frequent allusions to northern "slave-stealers" and to those who threatened peace by interfering with law (pp. 29, 42, 79–80, 87, 88, 89–90, 149, 199, 209, 248, 250). His defense of the act was legalistic. He cited the constitutional provision on which the law rested, noted that the Supreme Court had upheld it, and condemned antislavery men for being in open rebellion against the laws of the Union (pp. 248–249). He carried the issue to Pryne directly, demanding to know whether the latter was "a stockholder in the Syracuse underground railroad" (p. 276). Pryne held that the Constitution did not validate the law because it referred only to "persons held to labor" whereas the South denied that slaves were "persons." Further, the South could not show that service was "due" from its slaves (pp. 284–285). To Brownlow's direct challenge, he openly declared that his home was available as a refuge for any runaway and that should "kidnappers come in pursuit," his old rifle "would do good service" (p. 287). The situation was clear. Abolitionists would openly violate federal law; Southerners demanded enforcement to the letter. Compromise seemed impossible.

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[124] Brownlow's claim for the Stowell decision was too broad. It limited the Mansfield decision in the Somerset Case, which held slavery incompatible with English common law, to England itself and ruled that it did not apply to the colonies. The Stowell decision was important—and Brownlow did not fully grasp its significance—because it undercut the abolitionist contention that the Mansfield decision, in 1772, had been binding upon the American colonies. See Jenkins, pp. 142–143.

[125] See Nye, p. 195; Nichols, pp. 39–40.

[126] Hesseltine, pp. 343–346; Nye, pp. 197–202; Adams, p. 123.

SECTIONAL DEPRAVITY. With reference to the debate, one writer observed: "The slaves sometimes got lost amidst the display of bitter sectionalism,"[127] and in such controversy, "Brownlow seized the initiative. . . ."[128] Certainly the Parson was largely responsible for instigating a mode of contention which could only fan sectional animosity. In his opening speech he posed as a conciliatory man desirous of allaying sectional feeling and maintaining national unity. He noted that there were "true, reliable, conservative, pious, and patriotic men in the North," and he deplored indiscriminate attacks by editors, South and North, which were "calculated, if not *intended*, to fan a flame of intense warfare upon the subject of slavery" (p. 41). But his high principles and good intentions came to naught when, on the third evening, he presented arguments to show how criminal, immoral, and irreligious Northerners really were. Responding to newspaper attacks upon southern morals, he declared that most inmates in the prisons of Louisiana, Virginia, Maryland, Mississippi, and Alabama were born in the North. There were more crimes committed in Connecticut than in Louisiana, and in Massachusetts than in Virginia. Ohio was rampant with crime, and more crimes were recorded in New York alone than in the entire South. "If these records prove anything," the Parson asserted, "they establish the criminal degradation of Northern society, and the superiority of Southerners in the scale of civilization." Moreover, during the period 1823–1830 (!), more than two-thirds of army deserters were northern men. The North had more mulattoes than the South, a clear indication of immorality, for they "must have been born out of wedlock." "Look at New York," he cried, "with its tens of thousands of public prostitutes, besides thousands of private ones, and compare this

[127] Coulter, p. 101.
[128] Coulter, p. 107.

with the proverbial virtue of the white women of the Southern States. The white *men* of the North have had something to do with all this . . ." Southern officeholders were statesmanlike, but northern legislators were prone to graft and bribery. The North countenanced horrible conditions in its insane asylums, it was given to "crack-pot reform tendencies," and it was irreligious, with over a million persons in New England not attending church. Let northern men, the Parson proclaimed, "cleanse their skirts, first, of these abominable sins, before they come to the South to lecture us upon the sin of slavery" (pp. 143–164). Concomitantly, Brownlow sang the praises of the South. The following was typical:

> Yes, Gentlemen, ours is the land of chivalry, the land of the muse, the abode of statesmen, the home of oratory, the dwelling-place of the historian, and of the hero; the scenes of classic recollections and of hallowed associations lie South of Mason and Dixon's Line; and when the South is prostrated, (which God in his mercy never intends) the genius of the world will weep amid the ruins of the only true Republic ever known to civilized man! (p. 271).

In contrast, Pryne "sought to hold the debate . . . to a strict discussion of slavery."[129] Nonetheless, he rose to the challenge. To the Parson's statistics on crime, he replied in language no less logical for the extremity of its expression: "There are, in the Slave States of the Union, 250,000 criminals, who have robbed humanity of three million men, women and children, desolating the cradle, disrupting the marriage relation, breaking up families, and selling many of the daughters to prostitution. These criminals are yet untried, unconvicted, and unsentenced. . . . We of the North punish such criminals, while you of the South send them to Congress . . ." (pp. 175–176). He declared that Brownlow's taunts did not affect the issue. "If we are all a set of hypocrites," he suggested, "is that any reason why the South should all be a set of baby-stealers?" (p. 292). The wording of his own arguments, however, often revealed that his sectionalism matched the Parson's. Noting that even horses respond to kind treatment, he declared: "Yet the religion, the ethics, the politics of the South . . . have not yet attained the perception of the horse" (p. 242). Slavery existed "all for the purpose of allowing 250,000 slaveholders to lord it over their negroes, keep race-horses, and vary the amusements of gambling, fighting, and drinking by an occasional dash into politics, and, when weary of that, to astonish waiters . . . by blustering about Northern watering-places" (p. 179). He could even be patronizing, as when he referred to "the South that grows a little cotton, now and then, to help us along . . ." (p. 182). He matched Brownlow in absurdity when he held that the capital was burned by the British in 1812 because it was on southern soil and planters were too busy guarding their slaves to fight (p. 187).

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[129] Coulter, p. 106.

Of the 1850s Nevins has said, "Little thinking . . . was a process of reasoning from fact-buttressed premises to logical conclusions."[130] The sectional charges hurled by the Philadelphia debaters were typical. Pryne may have been more subdued than Brownlow, but his reticence probably sprang from personality differences. Certainly abolitionists often exhibited a bitterness toward the South which equaled Brownlow's contempt, shared by many Southerners, for northern society.[131] That both men could regard wholesale condemnation of the opposite section as germane, and that they apparently expected favorable public response to such attacks, indicated the depths of the widening sectional rupture.

PRESERVATION OF THE UNION. Presaging the views he would espouse when war came, Brownlow spoke for the Union throughout the debate. The purpose of abolition, he declared, was to "either crush slavery where it is, or to dissolve the Union" (p. 109). He cited abolition petitions seeking conventions to consider "a separation between the Free and Slave States" (pp. 109–110). If the Union was in danger, it was due to the endless agitation over slavery. The South had "a right to peace under the provisions of the Constitution, the acts of Congress, and the decisions of the Supreme Court; and we desire peace; but we see no prospect of quiet . . ." (p. 250). But make no mistake, he warned, the South, "goaded by men as wicked, as revolutionary, and as vile as . . . the Father of Evil," will fight. Southerners will retain their rights "or to a man we will die, strung along Mason and Dixon's Line, with our faces looking North" (p. 263). And if fight she must, the South would be invincible. She had an immense area, large population, men with military experience, and a will to fight, so that "when your *blue-bellied* Yankees come South, with 'Sharp's rifles' and Holy Bibles . . . they will not find themselves in *Kansas*" (pp. 264–271). But northern agitators will fail in their attempt to drive the South from the Union, for "we . . . intend to fight you *in* the Union, not *out* of it" (p. 271). Brownlow denounced southern "fire-eaters" as well as abolitionists, and he called upon every conservative man, South and North, in a fervent plea, to "stand by the Constitution of his country *as it is* . . ." (p. 272).

Pryne, too, ostensibly spoke for the Union: "I am a friend of the Union. . . . I would not have the South leave the Union, but would grapple her to it as with hooks of steel . . ." (p. 70).[132] His ardor, however, was no match for Brownlow's. He would rather dissolve the Union than have slavery survive. To the warning that the South might be drawn to secession, he replied: "Well, what of it? . . . Who cares? Not I. What interest has the North in the Union? Of what value is the Union to us when we have been used to catch the slaves of the South . . . when what the South wants of us is that we should . . . fight her battles for slavery?" (p. 230) Telling two humorous stories to illustrate his point, Pryne declared: "I am not in the least afraid that the South will secede" (pp. 230–232). Indeed, the South was responsible for the national crisis. "Ask the four million slaves," he cried, "who is the aggressor!" It was the South that disturbed the peace by demanding new slave territory, by upsetting the Missouri Compromise, and by seeking control of the government and the armed forces (pp. 283–284). Although Pryne did not threaten the use of force, he made it plain that he approved when it was employed. He praised John Brown's activities in Kansas (pp. 299–300), and he bluntly declared he would "far rather contribute Sharp's rifles, pistols, and bayonets" to free slaves here than to provide money for colonization in Africa (p. 191).

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[130] *Emergence of Lincoln*, I, 15.

[131] Nye, pp. 218, 242–243; Dumond, pp. 39–40.

[132] This declaration, together with subsequent statements, makes questionable Coulter's assertion (p. 106) that Pryne "said nothing" for the Union.

The views of both boded ill for the Union. Brownlow loved the Union, but he would fight to retain slavery; and Pryne would sacrifice the Union to attain emancipation.[133] Brownlow's unreserved confidence that the South could win a sectional war and Pryne's naive belief that the South would never secede showed how unrealistic their thinking was. Audience reaction was equally confused. Warm applause was given Brownlow's appeals for the Union,[134] and Pryne's willingness to see the South secede was greeted by "a tremendous storm of hisses."[135] Yet Pryne also drew "great applause" when he declared that he would resist enforcement of the Fugitive Slave Law.[136] How the Union could be preserved while its laws, right or wrong, were flouted was a question unresolved.

CIVIL LIBERTIES. Responding to a suggestion that he might be "growing sick of this discussion" (p. 141), Pryne offered to continue the debate in other cities (p. 173). Brownlow accepted on condition that half the meetings be held in the South (p. 215). Pryne converted the situation into an antislavery argument: "I cannot accept his proposition . . . because the South dare not let me utter, in freedom, my sentiments. . . . The brave South meets Northern ministers with mobs . . . with brickbats and bowie knives, and pistols, and bludgeons" (p. 282). His point was telling. Much abolitionist success in changing northern opinion resulted from appeals linked with civil liberties.[137] Pryne, however, failed to make suppression of civil rights a basic issue. Aside from a few casual references (pp. 71–72, 191–192, 299), he did not employ the usual abolitionist appeals concerning such acts as the mobbing of antislavery speakers, suppression of newspapers, the right of petition controversies, interference with the mails, and denials of free speech. Perhaps he felt that the facts and arguments were so well known as to make citation needless for a northern audience.

[133] For disunion sentiment among abolitionists, see Nye, pp. 17–18, 192–195.

[134] Philadelphia *Evening Bulletin*, Sept. 13, 1858.

[135] Philadelphia *Evening Bulletin*, Sept. 11, 1858; *The New York Times*, Sept. 11, 1858.

[136] Philadelphia *Evening Bulletin*, Sept. 13, 1858.

[137] This is the thesis of Nye's study; see especially pp. 52–53, 64, 121, 153–154, 174–176, 222; see also Wolf, p. 101.

Other Rhetorical Aspects

Since Brownlow's speeches were read for him, delivery is no factor in analyzing the debate. Pryne was clearly superior to the Parson in organization,[138] but there is no reason to believe that this difference was significant so far as reaction was concerned. Only language, aside from the arguments themselves, provides a salient rhetorical aspect. The many quotations given above make it unnecessary to document the intemperate, violent, and vindictive words employed by both speakers. Both admitted that their language was harsh, but neither was apologetic (pp. 111–112, 174–175). The extremism of their expression could serve only to inflame sectional feeling further. Theirs was not the language of persuasion; it was the language of belligerency, designed to impress the faithful and to antagonize the enemy. It reflected the intensity of feeling, both South and North.

Public Reaction

"Circling out from this hall," said Pryne, "the vast audience of the civilized world . . . will listen to this debate" (p. 103). His hopes, and Brownlow's (p. 18), proved too sanguine. Pryne apparently won an advantage with the immediate audience,[139] but press coverage was meager. Political and economic considerations were responsible. Even local papers gave scant coverage. Philadelphia's largest daily, the *Public Ledger,* carried a brief account of the first evening only.[140] It featured commercial and financial news, and its course reflected views of conservative businessmen who, recovering from the Panic of 1857 and welcoming southern trade, wanted no agitation concerning slavery. The Democratic *Press,* seeking party and national unity by deprecating sectional strife, gave superficial coverage and avoided a review of the arguments.[141] The *Daily News,* an organ of the rising Republicans, completely ignored the debate. Republicans opposed the spread of slavery, but were not abolitionists; even a partial or seeming endorsement of Pryne would have brought probable defections from their ranks. Only the *Evening Bulletin* and the *North American,* both opposed to slavery, gave significant space to the debate. They avoided editorial comment, however, their bias being shown by the disproportionate space given to Pryne.[142]

In other parts of the North press reaction was even less extensive. *The New York Times* carried daily accounts, but it was of the opinion that

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[138] This judgment is confirmed by Manzer (p. 71).

[139] The Philadelphia *Evening Bulletin* reported: "In the beginning of this contest, the feeling was apparently with Brownlow, but . . . at the conclusion, the victory of Mr. Pryne was decisive." (Sept. 13, 1858)

[140] Sept. 8, 1858.

[141] Sept. 8, 9, 10, 1858. No coverage was given the last two evenings.

[142] In general, reporting in both papers gave about twice as much space to Pryne as to Brownlow. During the debate the Parson complained of unfairness in newspaper coverage (p. 215); Pryne thought it had been fair to both sides (p. 280).

"the discussion . . . is not . . . likely to influence public opinion. . . . The question of the right and wrong of slavery is already settled . . ."[143] The New York *Herald* refused publication of any account: "We must decline to bore our readers with so stupid a repetition of a twice told tale. Mr. Brownlow and men like him do more to embitter the North against the South than the flaying alive of a thousand niggers [sic]."[144] The Pittsburgh *Press* called the debaters "a pair of the most arrant charlatans and humbugs of the day," and gave them no coverage.[145] In Cleveland, the heart of the antislavery Western Reserve, the debate fared no better. The Democratic *Daily Herald* and the Republican *Leader* ignored the encounter. The *Plain Dealer,* loyal to the Democracy, resorted to sarcasm: "The slavery discussion . . . will, no doubt, settle the question. . . . It is very evident that it is a high-toned, dignified, and refined specimen of forensic debate . . . and we wait with breathless anxiety to hear the result."[146] Even the *National Anti-Slavery Standard* took the position that Brownlow's "insolent challenge" should have been ignored "by decent Northern men."[147]

Southern editors were equally unimpressed. *De Bow's Review,* the veritable oracle and arbiter of southern opinion, gave no comment or report of the debate. The same was true for leading journals in Jackson, Natchez, New Orleans, Montgomery, Tuscaloosa, Mobile, Tallahassee, and Little Rock.[148] The Vicksburg *Daily Whig* gave the encounter brief mention, but provided no clue as to its attitude.[149] A North Carolina paper termed the meeting "a good, irritating, abusive, no account, useless and unchristian debate."[150] The Memphis *Daily Appeal,* anti-Know-Nothing and therefore anti-Brownlow, thought the debate a waste of time and said that the Parson was "an exponent of neither the intellect, culture, nor refinement of the South. . . ."[151]

Whether the volume published by the contenders influenced public opinion is a matter of conjecture. The publisher no longer has records relative to the quantity printed, the extent of sales, or the regions, if any, in which the book was popular.[152] There is little to indicate that the volume caused any appreciable reaction. It was neither reviewed nor mentioned by such journals as *Harper's*, *North American Review*, *National Magazine*, or the *Southern Quarterly*. All in all, it is clear that the debate produced little significant public response.[153]

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[143] Sept. 13, 1858. *The Times* thought the debate especially useless with Brownlow as the Southern spokesman: "Of Brownlow, the kindest thing we can say is to hope that he is insane. . . . We had hoped sincerely that when he came over the border, all respectable men would let him rave . . . and not prostitute either reason or good sense by trying to convince him of his errors." (*Ibid.*)

[144] In the Philadelphia *Evening Bulletin,* Sept. 14, 1858.

[145] In the Philadelphia *Evening Bulletin,* Sept. 14, 1858.

[146] Sept. 14, 1858.

[147] Sept. 18, 1858.

[148] For information regarding coverage given by Southern newspapers, the writer is indebted to Professors Waldo W. Braden, Louisiana State Univ.; Ralph Eubanks and Blair Hart, Univ. of Arkansas; Gregg Phifer, Florida State Univ.; H. Hardy Perritt, Birmingham Univ. School; and Clyde Reeves, Univ. of Mississippi.

[149] Sept. 14, 1858.

[150] The Wilmington *Journal,* in the Philadelphia *Evening Bulletin,* Sept. 14, 1858.

[151] Sept. 19, 1858.

[152] Letter from J. W. Lippincott, Jr., J. B. Lippincott Co., to the writer, Aug. 5, 1957.

CONCLUSION

Despite the apparent lack of public interest, the Brownlow-Pryne debate was important. (1) It summarized, in fairly efficient fashion, the major arguments which had been advanced, over the years, by abolitionists and proslavery theorists. (2) The very lack of popular reaction was significant in revealing American opinion. By 1858 most persons had made up their minds in regard to slavery and were thinking in terms of political action which would carry out their conclusions. If they saw no clear solution, many, especially businessmen, simply wanted no agitation regarding slavery. Recovering from the depression of 1857, they desired increased sectional trade and preservation of the Union as it was. (3) The speakers' arguments and language well illustrated the issues and feelings which were dividing the nation. Arguments based on the Bible aroused intense reactions inherent in Protestant ideals and could serve only to heighten emotion in both sections. The fact that Pryne did not feel a need to stress cruelty to slaves or the relation of slavery to civil liberties revealed how successful abolition propaganda had been in the North. The divergent interpretation of "natural rights," the fugitive slave controversy, and the wholesale condemnation of the opposing society all pointed up basic sectional differences. Brownlow's warning that the South would fight before it abandoned slavery and Pryne's willingness to see the Union dissolved were clear signs that a crisis of opinion was at hand. (4) Pryne's economic analysis, which the Parson could not refute, demonstrated that slavery was financially unsound and presaged the outcome of the war. (5) Finally, the debate revealed a basic weakness of the abolitionist position. Antislavery men had no plan and little concern for the racial problems which emancipation would bring, an oversight which would cost the nation dearly.

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[153] Manzer (pp. 87–88) expresses a similar judgment.

William H. Seward on the "Irrepressible Conflict," October 25, 1858

ROBERT T. OLIVER

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On Monday evening, October 25, 1858, Corinthian Hall in Rochester, New York, was the scene of a speech that stirred a fever of excitement across the nation and provided one of the key phrases in the history of our country. The effect was far out of proportion to either the intent of the speaker or the expectations of the audience. A routine political rally[1] produced an effect which may have determined the presidential election of 1860 and therefore the course of American history.

The speaker was far from being unknown or insignificant. On the contrary, Senator William Henry Seward was known and admired nationally as one of the greatest Whig politicians since Webster. As a friend of the powerful Thurlow Weed and, until late 1854, of the gifted Horace Greeley, and the prime national opponent of Senator Stephen A. Douglas, he was an architect of the new Republican party, and likely to be the successful contender for the presidency in the next election. At fifty-seven years of age, Seward had already become a political legend.

His fame dated back to 1838, when he became the first Whig in forty years to win election as governor of New York. A "Conscience Whig," he has been credited with crystallizing the antislavery sentiment of the North by his speech at Cleveland and his other addresses during the campaign of 1848.[2] In February, 1849, he was elected to the United States Senate, where he promptly became a leading opponent of the Kansas-Nebraska Bill and of the Compromise of 1850, a bitter antagonist of the Fugitive Slave Law, and a White House adviser who held President Zachary Taylor "under his thumb."[3] During all this time Seward was an active contender for the presidency.[4] He could easily have had the nomination of the new Republican party in 1856, except that his friend and political partner Thurlow Weed secretly opposed him, in the belief that the Democrats were sure to elect Buchanan and that Seward should be saved for a more probable victory in 1860.[5] An Ohio observer of this period wrote of Seward that "he is allowed to be the great man of Congress and the great power at Washington, second only to the power of slavery. In this he has no competitor."[6]

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[1] "This week Republican meetings will be held in probably every County and City, and perhaps one-third of the townships of our State. That they will generally be large and enthusiastic we cannot doubt." (New York *Tribune,* Oct. 26, 1858)

[2] T. K. Lothrop, *William Henry Seward* (Boston, 1899), p. 59. When Seward and Abraham Lincoln spoke together at Boston that fall, Lincoln said to him after the meeting: "I have been thinking about what you said in your speech. I reckon you're right. We have got to deal with this slavery question, and got to give much more attention to it hereafter than we have been doing." (Frederick W. Seward, *William Henry Seward, A Memoir of His Life, with Selections from His Letters* [New York, 1891], II, 60). "It was Seward who first spoke at length for the anti-slavery North . . ." (Allan Nevins, *Ordeal of the Union* [New York, 1947], I, 298).

The reputation which Seward had won by the time of the Congressional campaign of 1858 was great, but far from spotless. He was known as the close ally, and suspected of being the minion, of Thurlow Weed, whom Lincoln accused to his face of being generally considered a self-seeking political boss.[7] The usually conciliatory Robert Toombs agreed with Webster's characterization of Seward as "subtle and unscrupulous," and wrote, "We can never have peace and security with Seward, Greeley & Co. in the ascendancy in our national councils . . ."[8] To William J. Grayson, South Carolina author of *The Hireling and the Slave* (1856), Seward appeared fully as evil as Charles Sumner seemed to Preston Brooks. In Grayson's portrayal:

There Seward smiles the sweet perennial smile,
Skilled in the tricks of subtlety and guile;
The slyest schemer that the world e'er saw;
Peddler of sentiment and patent law;
Ready for fee or faction to display
His skill in either if the practise pay . . .

Even Horace Greeley turned against him in a bitter letter written on November 11, 1854, announcing "the dissolution of the political firm of SEWARD, WEED & GREELEY, by the withdrawal of the junior partner . . ."[9] But perhaps the most revealing characterization is that penned by an enthusiastic young admirer, Donn Piatt, who visited Seward soon after 1850 in Washington:

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[3] Nevins, II, 28; see also I, 175, 234, 255.

[4] Daniel Webster, who may be presumed a canny judge on this question, wrote in 1850 to Peter Harvey, describing Seward as "in some respects an able man, but subtle and unscrupulous, and will make everything bend to the one idea of making himself President. He has been catering first for Catholic votes and then for Abolition votes; 'tis no matter whose votes they are if they only lift him to the great office." (Frederic Bancroft, *The Life of William H. Seward* [New York, 1900], I, 200).

[5] Thurlow Weed Barnes, *A Memoir of Thurlow Weed* (Boston, 1884), 245.

[6] Barnes, p. 244.

[7] *Autobiography of Thurlow Weed*, Harriet A. Weed, ed. (Boston, 1883), p. 613.

[8] December 5, 1852, Crittenden Papers, in Nevins, II, 37.

[9] Barnes, pp. 277–281.

> Mr. Seward was good-naturedly cynical. . . . I ventured to remark, for example, that his appeal to a higher law had caused great excitement.
>
> "It was an imprudent speech," he said in reply, "and I ought to have been more careful."
>
> "Not," I said, "if you believe it."
>
> "My young friend," he said, "we are all warned to keep to ourselves what we do not believe. It is as well, frequently, to conceal what we do believe. There is apt to be public damnation in both. We are all bound by tradition to the tail end of a paper kite called a Constitution. It is held up by a string that, one of these days, a wind, a little stronger than usual, will break, and then we shall all tumble. . . ."
>
> His opposition to slavery was based entirely upon his intellectual processes, and not upon his heart. He had no pity for the slave, and no dislike for the master. . . .
>
> Seward would never have worked to the front and become a leader of men but for his partnership with Thurlow Weed.[10]

Seward shared in full degree the malaise that had also afflicted Webster and Clay: unquestionably a national leader yet always "unavailable" for the presidency.[11] In 1855 he suffered the humiliation of being snubbed by New England's politicians when he went to Boston to deliver the annual Plymouth Oration. He wrote his wife, "I am too much an anti-slavery man to be proscribed by anti-slavery men, and yet too much of a Whig to be allowed to lead. . . . Then again, I am so important to the Whig party that it cannot move without me; but that party (the Webster part of it) is so jaundiced toward me, that I am expected to decline being a candidate right off . . . and there are not less than half a dozen parties coming to negotiate with me as if I were a vendor of votes."[12]

Seward was right in assessing his position as being far weaker than readily appeared. Not only was he anathema to the South, and to the anti-Catholic, anti-immigrant Know-Nothings, but to all northern "moderates" who feared the implications of his appeal from the Constitution to a "higher law." Moreover, Seward's personality was ill fitted to win the loyalty which often proves the greatest strength of a political leader. Senator W. P. Fessenden, of Maine, thought Seward, in 1857, "perfectly bedeviled. He will vote alone, so far as the Republicans are concerned [on the question of sending troops to subdue the Mormons in Utah]; but he thinks himself wiser than all of us." And Senator John P. Hale considered him the Judas Iscariot of the Senate Republicans.[13] On February 5, 1858, Greeley wrote to Schuyler Colfax: "I cannot remember that Gov. Seward ever in his life said to me, 'What do you think of the present aspect of affairs? What is our true course in this emergency?' Do *you* happen to know of his ever consulting and counselling with anybody on terms of equality?"[14] The ever friendly Thurlow Weed analyzed Seward's character as possessing "unmistakable evidences of stern integrity, earnest patriotism, and unswerving fidelity. I saw also in him a rare capacity for intellectual labor, with an industry which never tired and required no relaxation; to all which was added a purity and delicacy of habit and character almost feminine."[15] Favorable as this description was intended to be,[16] it yet suggested the quality of self-centered righteousness which was a fatal handicap to Seward's ambition.

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[10] *Memories of the Men Who Saved the Union* (New York, 1887), pp. 135–136, 138, 150.

[11] The passions of the time which prevented nomination of any man of outspoken principle were deprecated by the Baltimore *Patriot,* quoted in Rochester *Democrat and American,* Dec. 23, 1858:

"Mr. Seward is one of those rare sons of centuries who leaves no man indifferent about him, but makes every man either his enemy or his devoted friend.

"Such a man as this is the great power in and over his party; such a man may control its policy and inspire it with ideas; but such a man cannot receive its nomination. He is not available." The *Democrat and American* added: "We agree with the Newark *Mercury,* that it is time for the people to break away from the miserable dogma, that 'our great men cannot reach public station and that high position can only be acquired by the miserable arts of the demagogue.' "

[12] Lothrop, p. 136.

Seward had commenced his political career by being elected to the New York State Senate in 1830 as a nominee of the new, localized, but vigorous Anti-Mason party. Twenty-eight years later, at the time of the Rochester speech, he found himself again trying to create political unity out of the broken pieces of old loyalties and the divergent enthusiasms of new movements. The "Conscience Whigs," for whom Seward had been an effective spokesman, represented a wide range of opinion on how best to control, or even eliminate, slavery. The abolitionists, from their stronghold in New England, had established an active outpost in Syracuse and influenced many votes in upstate New York. The Know-Nothings were able by 1854 to elect seventy-five congressmen, and in the following year, nine governors. Then the Kansas-Nebraska dispute provided another issue on which to seek votes in the twelve northern states.

Seward and Thurlow Weed were among the first influential Whigs to sense the possibility of reorganizing the varied dissident groups into a new party. The small group of Whigs, Free-Soilers, and antislavery Democrats who met at Ripon, Wisconsin, in February, 1854, and founded the Republican party, seemed to point the way toward a sound amalgamation. " 'Whig' was a cherished word in New York,"[17] but Weed set to work cannily to shift his organization toward the Republicans. By January, 1856, he was able to elicit a letter from Governor Washington Hunt, admitting that "it seems to be fore-ordained that our party is to be swallowed up in fusion." Hunt hoped, however, that slavery would not be the sole issue utilized by the Republicans, for "I should be good for nothing in a party which proposes nothing but to struggle and talk about one and only one everlasting topic."[18]

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[13] Lothrop, p. 185.

[14] Greeley-Colfax Correspondence, New York Public Library.

[15] *Autobiography*, p. 423.

[16] Another characterization appeared over the signature "H" in Rochester *Democrat and American*, Nov. 4, 1858: "Messrs. Editors:—I heard Gov. Seward at Corinthian Hall last week on Monday evening, with great pleasure. He is, indeed, the Champion of Freedom. And well would it be for our Country if we had more members in our National Legislature, who were imbued with the same patriotism. . . . There he stood, its calm and eloquent advocate; true to his mission—undaunted by the wrath of tyrants. I have long been acquainted with Mr. Seward, and have always found every emotion of his heart to be generous and noble. He will always be found on the side of the oppressed; a despiser of aristocracy, and a hater of tyrants."

Yet regardless of how many may have sympathized with Hunt's view, slavery agitation could not be kept from the forefront of American politics, nor did any other issue have vitality enough to submerge all differences and thus provide a base for a new party. Of this both Seward and Weed were sure. Seward proclaimed in the *Tribune* that "it was clear enough to all with discerning vision that old party distinctions were superseded and meaningless."[19] In the 1856 elections, Seward was returned to the Senate as a Whig, despite strenuous efforts by the Know-Nothings to defeat him. By Seward and by the country generally, his strength was fully realized; but especially after his failure to win the Republican presidential nomination of 1856, Seward was also unhappily and sharply aware of the limitations which his ambition must endure.

Following Frémont's nomination, Seward wrote to Weed that "it is very decidedly my impression that the time has come for me to give up public life altogether, and retire with dignity at the close of this session of Congress, when my policy will have been inaugurated, and Republicans will feel it a relief to be discharged of fancied claims of mine for reward."[20] Nevertheless, like the good party man he had always been and continued to be, Seward campaigned actively for Frémont, who carried New York with a plurality of 80,000 votes.

As the campaign of 1858 got under way, Seward wished to have no part in it. He was weary from the constant hammering of the Senate debates during the preceding session; he was not a candidate himself and might best serve his own interests by avoiding unnecessary public commitments; and he had no special regard for the third-choice Republican nominee for Governor of New York, Edwin D. Morgan.

However, neither Seward's unquenchable ambition for the presidency nor the course of events permitted his retirement from public life. In the Senate session of 1857–1858, the debate over the admission of Kansas continued with increasing acrimony, and slavery became more than ever the transcendent issue. Both the size of Frémont's vote[21] and the vacillation of Buchanan (whom Seward despised) encouraged him to continue the struggle. Theodore Parker spurred him on in his antislavery leadership, and letters from all over the country (except the South) testified to his dominant position.[22]

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[17] Barnes, p. 241.

[18] Barnes, pp. 242–243.

[19] Oct. 16, 1854. Three weeks later Greeley was bitterly breaking with Seward and Weed and, thereafter, worked against them.

[20] May 4, 1856, in Barnes, p. 244. Seward did not know that Weed had secretly blocked his nomination, in order to "save" him for 1860.

Seward spent the summer in his home at Auburn, ignoring politics so far as a man of his prominence could. Replying to the insistent Theodore Parker in July, he wrote: "Between so many guides as we have, so many of them honest, but unreasoning, and so many willfully deceptive, though plausible, it is hard enough to keep a vigorous, respectable, and effective political party in due organization."[23] The sentiments were generally calculated to please and satisfy Parker, though one may suspect that Seward's antithetical phrasing was meant as much to please his own rhetorical fancy as to express basic beliefs, and his choice of the word *respectable* could scarcely have been anything but a half-veiled criticism of Parker's abolitionism. At about the same time Seward was writing to "an old friend" that "whatever might be pleaded for concession and compromise, on the former occasion of which you speak, there can be no excuse for it now. The habit of compromise, however, like all others, is hard to shake off."[24] In September Seward left for a vacation trip to Niagara Falls, but his relaxation was cut short "by urgent pleas to 'take the stump' " since "the Republicans throughout the North were at last united and vigorous."[25] This assurance was fortified by the fact of Republican success in the early elections (October 14) held in Indiana, Pennsylvania, Ohio, Maine, and Vermont.

Both Seward's ambition and his real sense of duty as a party man led him to respond to the challenge and the opportunity presented by the evidences of sweeping Republican gains. Apparently, as was his custom, he determined in solitary meditation upon the proper strategy to pursue. Only a few months earlier his political thinking had been timid and indefinite concerning how to steer an effective course among all the diverse groups awkwardly clustered under the new Republican banner.[26] Now that he was again to join battle, with speeches in Rochester, Rome, Oswego, and Auburn, he decided to reiterate forcefully the same antislavery sentiments which he had been uttering in Senate and public speeches since 1848.

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[21] It was 1,341,264, as compared to Buchanan's 1,838,169. Frémont carried eleven states, as against the fourteen that went for Buchanan.

[22] F. W. Seward, *Seward at Washington as Senator and Secretary of State* (New York, 1891), *passim.*

[23] Seward, p. 349.

[24] Seward, p. 350.

[25] Seward, p. 351. Some of these letters, including one from young Roscoe Conkling of Utica, candidate for a first term in Congress, are in the William Seward Collection, Rush-Rhees Library, Univ. of Rochester.

[26] On Jan. 3, 1857, he wrote a stern letter to the "Disunion Convention" of Abolitionists, scheduled to meet in Worcester, Mass., Jan. 15, to call for secession of the free from the slave states. Seward addressed them courageously and positively, saying: "I look upon the event of such a dissolution of the Union as one neither probable nor even possible under any circumstances that can now be foreseen in the progress of the Republic." The letter was both brave and forthright, but it never was sent! After finishing it, Seward thought better of offering such an affront to the large bloc of abolitionist votes, and discreetly kept the letter in his desk. (Bancroft, I, 435–436.)

Yet two of Seward's extant letters, written after the Rochester speech was delivered, indicate that he had no slightest intention of creating a sensation. To his friend, and later biographer, George E. Baker, Seward wrote soon after the election of November 2: "I did not know how useful the speech [at Rochester] was to be, until I read a letter from Theodore Parker last night." And replying to Parker, after Thanksgiving, Seward explained: "In the cities, the Republican Party having cowered before the 'Know-Nothing' movement, instead of resisting it defiantly from the first, as they ought to have done, have been trying to propitiate them, and negotiate with them, to the great scandal of that portion of the party that lives off the sidewalks [that is, in rural areas]. It was apparent to me that the only danger in our way, in the recent election, was that this disgust might keep back the Republican hosts, or divide them. To the end of resisting this tendency, I discoursed at Rochester, Rome, Oswego, and here, on the key that is familiar to the people of the rural districts. *Not one of them dreamed more than I did, that this was a new, or bolder piece of composition, than they had learned and loved for many years.*"[27]

Seward was not alone in considering the Rochester speech merely a routine political campaign address. The Republicans of Rochester were in no particular need of exhortation.[28] They had established headquarters in the former Flour City Bank quarters in the Corinthian Building and were carrying on a very active campaign.[29] On October 25 they inserted a display in the *Democrat and American*, announcing:

> ANOTHER RALLY
>
> [Picture of Eagle holding American flag]
>
> We have the satisfaction of announcing that
>
> WILLIAM H. SEWARD
>
> will address the Republicans of Rochester and vicinity, on
>
> MONDAY EVENING, OCT. 25TH,
> AT CORINTHIAN HALL
>
> GOV. SEWARD'S SPEECH THIS EVENING!
>
> There will, of course, be a large concourse at Corinthian Hall this evening, to hear Gov. Seward speak. We have reason to think that he will deliver a Speech which all the

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[27] Seward, p. 353; italics added.

[28] New York *Daily Tribune* (Oct. 16, 1858) carried a note from Rochester: "Yesterday we had a rouser of a mass meeting at the City Hall. The hall was completely crammed and the people were full of genuine enthusiasm."

[29] Rochester *Democrat and American*, Oct. 25, 1858.

> Friends of Freedom in this city will delight to listen to, and which will be read throughout the country, and exert a great influence in the present crisis of our affairs.
>
> We shall publish a full report of the Speech in our Daily to-morrow morning, and on Wednesday morning in our Weekly Edition.

Aside from this paid advertisement, neither Rochester paper gave more than cursory attention to Seward's speech until after it had been drummed into fame by the reaction of other newspapers. The *Democrat and American*, in its edition for Monday morning, October 25, announced, "Gov. Seward will probably arrive in this city at half-past 10 o'clock, on the Auburn Road." And on the following day it carried on page two the complete text of the speech without comment. This is the complete coverage given to the Rochester speech by this pro-Douglas paper. The even more enthusiastically Democratic Rochester *Union and Advertiser* carried in its October 25 afternoon edition, in column four on the editorial page, under the general heading "City Affairs," this note: "Senator Seward—This gentleman arrived from Auburn this morning, and was met at the depot by a number of his political friends. He seems to be quite well and is lively engaged in political work. Governor S. is the guest of his friend Hon. S. G. Andrews." Directly preceding this paragraph was a notice of a "Democratic Meeting" for the evening, but there was no reference to Seward's forthcoming speech. The *Union and Advertiser* on the following day carried another notice of another Democratic meeting "in the German and English languages," but with no mention, then or in subsequent issues, of Seward's speech. This is all the more regrettable since the editor demonstrated in an October 25 editorial that he had some awareness of the significance of the manner of a speaker and the mood of his audience, and some competence in rhetorical criticism.[30]

The significant facts are that Seward was heartsick in 1858, following his failure to receive the Republican nomination in 1856; that he toyed with the idea of retiring from public life; that he had no desire to participate in the campaign of 1858 and was only drawn into it by the earnest pleas of his political friends; that he was fully accustomed to preparing his speeches without any consultation with other party leaders or friends; and that his agreement to speak at Rochester, Oswego, Rome, and Auburn was doubtless motivated by a desire to make another major effort to weld together various divergent political groupings into a more cohesive party, which might finally satisfy his ambition by making him the Republican candidate in 1860. Following the 1858 election, Seward went to Europe for a long vacation, apparently acting on the theory that the safest political course was to keep out of public controversy until the nominating convention of 1860 approached.

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[30] The main editorial, Rochester *Union and Advertiser* (Oct. 25, 1858) commenced: "The meeting of the Democracy on Saturday night was in all respects a gratifying affair.—The spacious City Hall was well filled with an intelligent audience which listened attentively and approvingly to the candid, straight-forward, logical speech of the Democratic candidate for Governor." After summarizing Parker's points that (1) slavery was not the real issue; (2) the Democrats were the States' Rights party; and (3) the campaign should center around New York state issues, not around the Kansas slavery dispute, the editorial continued: "The manner of Judge Parker, as well as the style of his oratory, is not calculated to arouse and excite; but it is calculated to rivet the attention and to interest the reasoning faculties in the matter which he discusses. The impression he makes upon his auditory will be lasting, because he addresses the judgement instead of the feelings."

Following his usual custom, he circulated copies of the Rochester speech to newspapers in advance of its delivery.[31] He came to the meeting in full consciousness of national leadership and with the disarming awareness that Corinthian Hall would be packed full of ardent partisans who needed and desired nothing more than a string of emotion-triggers to release their burgeoning enthusiasm. The hall was indeed packed to overflowing. Thurlow Weed's Albany *Journal* called it an "immense meeting," and said Seward's hour and a half speech was "greeted with overwhelming enthusiasm."[32] Seward's opening remarks were to note "the unmistakable outbreaks of zeal which occur all around me."

The delivery was notable for the intensity and earnestness of the speaker,[33] qualities which combined with his enormous prestige to assure closest attention. In both voice and bearing he was as ill fitted for the public platform as was Abraham Lincoln. Charles Francis Adams, in summing up Seward's life, noted that "neither in face nor in figure would he have attracted particular notice, and both his voice and power of articulation were little favorable to the power of his elocution. Yet he had in a remarkable degree the faculty of fixing the hearer's attention—the surest test of oratorical superiority."[34] Another contemporary, Donn Piatt, presented a very similar view of Seward as "a slender, hook-nosed, gray-eyed, homely man" whose "voice was harsh and unpleasant, and his manner extremely angular and awkward. . . . [Yet] I at once observed that he commanded the attention of the Senate."[35]

This was the occasion—a routine political rally; and this the speaker—a disillusioned politician with few oratorical attributes—for a speech that imbedded a phrase deep into American consciousness with sharp and perhaps decisive effects.

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[31] "Mr. Seward's Rochester speech . . . was written out and printed before it was delivered" (Rochester *Union and Advertiser*, Nov. 4, 1858).

[32] The evening edition of *The New York Times* (Oct. 26, 1858) carried this notice: "Rochester, October 25. Senator Seward addressed a very large Republican meeting in this city tonight. Corinthian Hall was crowded to excess. He spoke about an hour and a half." Then followed eight column-inches of summary of the speech.

[33] ". . . you are earnest men," Seward told his Rochester audience," and such a man am I."

[34] *An Address on the Life, Character, and Services of William Henry Seward; Delivered at the Request of Both Houses of the Legislature of New York, at Albany*, Apr. 18, 1873, (Albany, 1873), p. 72.

[35] Piatt, p. 132.

In style the Rochester address is plain, unadorned, and relatively simple in structure. The method of development is argumentative, fortified by selected facts, all tending directly toward the speaker's conclusion that the Democratic party had become the servile instrument of the slaveholders. In outline, Seward spoke as follows:[36]

Irrepressible Conflict

October 25, 1858

INTRODUCTION

I. Your earnestness and mine demand attention to the central issue.
II. The issue is whether the Democrats deserve "to retain the confidence of the American people."

BODY

I. The United States "exhibits . . . two radically different political systems."
    A. The one rests "on the basis of servile or Slave labor."
    B. The free labor system dates back only 500 years.
II. "The Slave system . . . debases"; the "free labor system educates . . . secures universal contentment . . ."
    A. Slavery leads to despotism, as in Russia.
    B. Free labor nations inevitably become republics or democracies.
    C. The two systems proved irreconcilable in Europe.
        1. Napoleon forecast "that Europe would ultimately be either all Cossack or all Republican."

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[36] The summary printed in Greeley's *Tribune* (Oct. 26) is interesting in its failure to note the aspect of the speech which aroused the strongest reaction: "Senator Seward . . . dwelt chiefly upon the subject of slavery, showing, *first,* what were the intentions of the framers of the Constitution, and *second,* what has been the tendency of the Government under the control of the aristocracy of Slavery. This country, he said, must eventually be wholly Free or altogether Slave territory. He arraigned the Democratic party as the great ally of the Slave Power. Democratic Administrations merely record its behests. The next demand of the Slave Power will be the abrogation of the law suppressing the slave trade, and so they will import from Africa, at the cost of only $20 a head, slaves enough to fill up the interior of the continent. Thus, relatively increasing the number of Slave States, they will allow no amendments to the Constitution prejudicial to their interests, and having permanently established their power they will expect the Federal Judiciary to nullify all State laws which shall interfere with the internal or foreign commerce in slaves. When the Free States shall be sufficiently demoralized to tolerate those designs, they may reasonably conclude that Slavery will be accepted by these States themselves. If it were possible to conceive for a moment that the Democratic party should disobey the behests of the slaveholders, we should then see a withdrawal of the slaveholders, who would leave the party to perish. The portion of the party which is found in the Free States is a mere appendage, convenient to modify its sectional character without impairing its sectional constitution, and is less effective in regulating its movement than the nebulous tail of the comet is in determining its appointed though apparently eccentric course in the fiery sphere from which it emanates. Senator S. finally spoke of the policy of the Republican party as contrasted with that of the Democratic, and alluded to the recent successes of the former in Pennsylvania and the West."

        2. Europe abolished slavery, except in Russia and Turkey, where its hold is weakening.
    D. In the United States the two systems proved so incompatible "that every new State . . . makes its first political act a choice of the one and an exclusion of the other."
    E. Increases of population, transportation, and commerce are bringing the two systems "into closer contact, and collision results."

III. "Shall I tell you what this collision means? . . . It is an irrepressible conflict between opposing and enduring forces, and it means that the United States must and will, sooner or later, become either entirely a Slave-holding nation, or entirely a Free-labor nation."

IV. Contrary to the expectations of the founding fathers, the Slave States have found means of continually extending their power and territory.
    A. They maintain a majority in the Senate.
    B. They admit Slave States and exclude free States.
    C. On the basis of the Dred Scott decision, they carry slavery into all the territories.
    D. They will annex foreign Slave-holding States.
    E. They plan to re-establish the Slave trade.
    F. With the free States demoralized by these events, they will re-introduce Slavery into every State now prohibiting it.

V. Their program will succeed unless Slavery is actively opposed.
    A. "The Democratic party must be permanently dislodged from the Government."
    B. While professing not to seek the extension of Slavery, the Democratic party is inherently committed to fight for the continual extension of slavery and the power of slaveholders.

VI. The remedy lies in support of the Republican party.
    A. As a new party, it will develop as the freedom-loving sentiments of the people demand.
    B. "This is a Constitution of Freedom. It is being converted into a Constitution of Slavery. It is a Republican Constitution. It is being made an Aristocratic one."

CONCLUSION

I. "I know that the Democratic party must go down and the Republican party rise into its place."
    A. The Democratic party has betrayed the principle of equality on which it was founded.
    B. Assured Republican success "lies in the fact that it is the party of one idea; but that idea is a noble one—an idea that fills and expands all generous souls; the idea of equality . . ."
    C. The "revolution has begun." It will "never go backward."

As this outline of Seward's speech reveals, he meant to deliver a ringing partisan attack against the Democratic party, gearing his argument largely to the explosive slavery issue, which seemed to offer the surest means of uniting the divergent minority groups ranging all the way from the Know-Nothings to the Whigs, from the Abolitionists to the Republicans. As his subsequent letter to Parker protested, he meant merely to speak to the partisan audience in a manner already familiar, if not hackneyed.

Students of public address may well ponder the fact that Seward's "irrepressible conflict" phrase, for no obvious reason, burned itself uniquely into public consciousness. It created a furor wholly unrivaled by Lincoln's declaration that " 'a house divided against itself cannot stand.' "[37] Perhaps Lincoln's use of the Biblical term was disarming. Perhaps his references to "crisis" and "agitation" were less explosive than Seward's choice of "conflict."

Seward himself had aroused no particular reaction with his speech at Cleveland, ten years earlier, in which he said, "Slavery . . . can be and it must be abolished, and you and I can and must do it." Nor did any storm arise when Seward said at Albany, on October 12, 1855: "Slavery is not and never can be perpetual. It will be overthrown either peacefully and lawfully under the Constitution, or it will work the subversion of the Constitution, together with its own overthrow." Neither did any public outcry of consequence greet such sentiments as were expressed by Senator Wilson in October, 1855, when he said: "We shall overthrow the Slave Power of the Republic; we shall enthrone freedom. . . ."[38]

It seems obvious that the prolonged, bitter and nationwide reaction to Seward's speech at Rochester occurred not because of what was said, or because of who said it, but because the man, the utterance, and the occasion formed a precise combination that proved highly combustible.

National concern over slavery was more acute in 1858 than it had been in 1848 or 1855. Seward himself was a more "dangerous" man in 1858, inasmuch as he seemed very likely to receive from the Republican Convention of 1860 a nomination which would become a ticket to the White House. When he spoke in the campaign of 1858 he attracted unusual attention as "the man to beat in '60," arousing the antagonism both of the Democrats and of alternative Republican candidates. And it is quite possible that the word *conflict* was the puff which blew up the flame of national indignation and alarm—for by 1858 the possibility of civil war was more than a remote fantasy. Perhaps the most important consideration of all was the fact that by 1858 the South had a powerful secession party, led by Yancey, Rhett, and Hammond, alert to seize and magnify any means of increasing intersectional tension. And matching the fervor of these southern fire-eaters was the avid desire of the new Republican leaders to weld a winning combination out of the "protest groups" at almost any cost.

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[37] In a speech at Springfield, Ill., June 17, 1858.

[38] Quoted in a Washington dispatch, New York *Tribune* (Nov. 9, 1858) which added, "there is scarcely a prominent orator or writer in the Republican ranks who does not go as far, or further than Mr. Seward."

Every single one of these groups (Democratic politicians, southern secessionists, rival Republican candidates, abolitionists, and opportunistic Republican strategists) had reasons of its own for magnifying the significance of Seward's "irrepressible conflict" phrase. Seward was largely an innocent victim of these political strategists—fated to be thwarted of his own deepest ambition by their machinations.

The position of the Republican politicians was stated with utmost frankness by the Washington correspondent for the New York *Tribune*, in his commentary on the Rochester address:

> In fact the adoption of any lower ground of action on the Slavery question by the Republican party would hazard the loss of New-England, New-York and Ohio, through the secession of the more earnest Anti-Slavery men. A new Liberty or a new Free Soil party would be formed, which would break down the Republican party as the Whig party was broken down. The real danger to the Republican party is not in front but in the rear. It is safe and will be successful so long as it presses boldly on and confronts the Slave Power with determination and energy. But if it hesitates and falters it will perish by internal dissensions. There is danger undoubtedly that the cautious and timid and half-baked portion of the party may be alarmed at what seems to them the progress of ultraism and fanaticism. But a clearer understanding of the nature of the struggle that is going on in this country between Freedom and Slavery, will satisfy even this class that anything short of Mr. Seward's plan of action would break the opposition to the Pro-Slavery Democracy into disorderly and conflicting fragments.[39]

Thus the picture emerges into focus. Seward reluctantly let himself be persuaded to take part in the 1858 campaign, preparing his speeches, as was his practice, without consultation with other party strategists. He had no intention of saying anything of special import, and neither he nor his immediate audience realized that he had done so until the national reaction began to accumulate. For various reasons arising from their own self-interest, many powerful groups insisted on emphasizing the presumed theme of violence in the Rochester address. Southern extremists used it to unite their section. Republican strategists used it to create a focal center for a winning campaign in 1860. Seward fled to Europe to escape the effects upon his personal political fortunes, but without success. When the Convention of 1860 was held, "irrepressible conflict" was the essence of the platform adopted. But Seward, its author, had served his purpose and was dropped, to make a place for A. Lincoln, a more cautious politician from Illinois.

Seward's keynote phrase has been stereotyped by historians,[40] who have contended ever since over the question whether the Civil War really was

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[39] Nov. 9, 1858.

[40] The phrase has come to be so fully taken for granted as now to be freely used without quotation marks, as in the following: ". . . deeply convinced of the irrepressible conflict between the two systems [Nazism and Democracy] of society . . ." (Arthur M. Schlesinger, *Paths to the Present* [New York, 1949], p. 204.)

"irrepressible" or was instead the tragic result of poor statesmanship.[41] There is the view of Avery Craven that the "war was the product, not so much of sectional differences as of emotions developed about differences, which by 1861 made it impossible longer to reason, to trust, or to compromise."[42] With this conviction, Craven concluded that "the doctrines of the irrepressible conflict and the higher law led inevitably to violence."[43] Herbert Agar, on the contrary, expressed the more common view that agrarianism, slavery, and devotion to states' rights had so weakened the attachment of Southerners to union with the industrialized North and expanding West, both of which depended upon a strongly federalized, centralized government for their continued progress, that conflict was inevitable.[44] In the first view, Seward and the abolitionists in the North, and the fire-eaters of the South, notably Rhett and Yancey, inflamed passions and instigated violence. In the latter view, "Seward was but popularizing a familiar idea."[45] Whichever theory may be accepted, it is evident that for Seward's contemporaries the "irrepressible conflict" phrase crystallized the issue confronting the nation more definitely than any uttered by the other notable figures of the time. Within a week of its utterance the phrase assumed a significance in American thinking which it has maintained for a century.

Yet the Rochester speech has been almost as widely misunderstood as it has been deeply influential. Allan Nevins misdated the speech, ascribing it to September 25, and from that misdating deduced an influence for it upon the election of November 3 which it manifestly could not have had.[46]

The outcome of the congressional elections of 1858 was probably determined well in advance of Seward's speech. In a natural effort to win political advantages for Seward, such friends as George E. Baker claimed in retrospect that "the struggle in the state was nevertheless severe, and the result seemed to many to be doubtful. In this emergency, Mr. Seward appeared before the people, and by his speeches at Rochester, Rome, and Auburn, rallied the strength of the republicans and at the same time destroyed the hopes of the opposition. His speech at Rochester, especially, gave a new aspect to the contest, and turned the tide in favor of the republican party."[47] The faithful Lothrop echoed that "the speech had great weight in the autumn elections."[48] But as the campaign drew toward its close, there seemed little reason to question its outcome. As Raymond, of *The New York Times,* confidently predicted in his editorial of October 29, "The prospect at present is that the Republicans will carry the State." Neither Raymond nor any other preelection commentator credited Seward's speech with even a modicum of influence in determining the result.

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[41] Calling the *irrepressible conflict* phrase "an artificial creation of inflamed minds," historian Avery Craven concluded: "It is no violation of the best historical judgments to assert that any kind of sane policy in Washington in 1860 might have saved the day for nationalism." (*The Repressible Conflict, 1830–1861* [Baton Rouge, 1939], pp. 64, 65.)

[42] Craven, p. 64.

[43] Craven, *The Coming of the Civil War* (New York, 1942), p. 408.

[44] *The Price of Union* (Boston, 1950), p. 402.

[45] Richmond *Examiner,* Jan. 6, 1860.

[46] "The irrepressible conflict speech frightened many New Yorkers that autumn into voting Democratic" (*The Emergence of Lincoln,* I, 411). Throughout both this book and the *Ordeal of the Union,* Nevins reveals a strong bias against Seward which colored his judgment unfavorably. S. E. Forman, author of several American histories, persisted in dating the speech two years early, even in the third edition of his most widely used book (*Our Republic* [New York, 1922, 1929, 1934]). He evaluates the speech as the "keynote of the campaign" of 1856, in which "passion burned fiercely" (1934 ed., p. 399).

President Buchanan wrote to his niece, Harriet Lane, that the early elections in Pennsylvania, Indiana, Ohio, Iowa, Vermont, and Maine resulted in "our crushing defeat . . . so great that it is almost absurd."[49] The Democratic New York *Herald* was moved on October 22 to "frankly confess that we anticipate nothing else than a crushing defeat of our Democracy in November."[50] By Monday, November 1, the New York *News* was advising its readers that "the election of the Democratic State ticket may be set down as a certainty." Raymond's *Times* declared the next day (November 2) that "both parties strive for *prestige* rather than immediate power. Both look rather to the effect of the result upon the Presidential election of 1860 . . ."

It is highly questionable that the Rochester speech influenced many votes either way in the November 3 elections. Frederic Bancroft incorrectly declared that "The 'irrepressible conflict' was made a bugbear for the remainder of the campaign."[51] Actually, aside from its appearance without comment in several newspapers, it received no editorial attention at all until after the election was over. The editor of the New York *Herald* rendered the fairer judgment, on November 4, 1858, when he declared that the Republicans might have been defeated through fears aroused by the speech *if it had been delivered a month earlier.*

The real influence of the speech was its effect in focusing attention upon the slavery issue, in unifying the Republican party, and in identifying Seward so strongly with uncompromising opposition to the South as to facilitate Lincoln's nomination and to defeat Seward's own prospects in the 1860 Republican Convention.

The Richmond *Examiner* asked the pertinent question, "Why does Seward head the political movements and lead the people?" and offered this answer: "His abilities are fair, but not great . . . [but] he alone, of all the men of action and intellect in his section, saw early the law which controls the mind of the northern masses."[52] Bancroft believed Seward emerged into leadership of the antislavery sentiment because he "had the genius to sum it up finally in two words—'irrepressible conflict' "—which "exactly characterized a most important fact."[53] The Rochester *Union and Advertiser,* in its editorial commentary on the election, noted that "as one of the corollaries of the result in this state, William H. Seward may now be regarded as the Republican Presidential candidate for 1860."[54] The following day it identified the Rochester speech as "the platform upon which that gentleman will stand while his friends push him for the Republican nomination for the next Presidency." The Washington correspondent of the New York *Courier and Enquirer*, summing up sentiment in the capital on November 10, 1858, concluded that "the Presidential struggle for 1860 lies between Mr. Seward and Mr. Douglas." In a careful study of the 1860 campaign, T. Maxwell Collier decided that Seward's "speech at Rochester, October 25, 1858, aided greatly in focusing the attention of Republican partisans and newspapers toward his candidacy in 1860."[55] *The New York Times*, on November 2, 1858, editorialized on the eve of election that "both parties . . . look rather to the effect of the result upon the Presidential election of 1860 . . ." A "border state" observer, evaluating Bell, Douglas, and Seward for the Presidency, rejected Seward on the ground that his Rochester speech was too uncompromising.[56]

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[47] *Works of William Henry Seward,* George E. Baker, ed. (Boston, 1887–1889), "Memoir," I, 56. Text of the Rochester speech appears in IV, 289–302.

[48] Lothrop, p. 186.

[49] Oct. 15, 1858 (Buchanan-Johnson Papers, Library of Congress).

[50] Quoted joyously by the Republican Syracuse *Daily Standard,* Oct. 25, 1858. Added Horace Greeley in the New York *Daily Tribune* (Nov. 4, 1858): "The victory just won by the Republicans of our State is one of which we cannot feel proud. We ought to have triumphed by Fifty Thousand." The actual Republican plurality in New York was 18,640 votes.

[51] Bancroft, I, 461.

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[52] Editorial, Jan. 6, 1860. The editor of the Rochester *Democrat and American* addressed himself to the same question, Dec. 16, 1858: "Either the striking manner in which Gov. SEWARD enunciates propositions, gives to them a prominence which they do not possess when spoken by other persons of eminence, or his own position gives to his sentiments importance which is not accorded to the political apotheisms of other statesmen. His "Higher Law" doctrine was no new thing,—it was found, in nearly the same phrase, in speeches, legal decisions and homilies without number. But when uttered by Gov. SEWARD, it was denounced as a monstrous heresy. So with his idea of an "irrepressible conflict" between Slavery and Freedom—a truism which the whole history of the country, and of the world demonstrates beyond cavil. That Freedom and Slavery cannot co-exist forever in the same confederacy, is a truth which JEFFERSON put in the following strong language:

" '*Nothing is more certainly written in the book of fate,* THAN THAT THESE PEOPLE ARE TO BE FREE: *nor is it less certain that the two races, equally free, cannot live in the same government.* Nature, habit, opinion, have drawn indelible lines of distinction between them. It is still in our power to direct the process of emancipation and deportation peaceably, and in such slow degree as that, this evil will wear off insensibly, and their place be, *parri passu, filled up with free white laborers.* If on the contrary, it is left to force itself on, human nature must shudder at the prospect held up.'

"The *Atlas and Argus* thinks that the election to the Presidency of a man holding such sentiments would give sufficient provocation for the secession of slave-holding States. Some Southern Statesmen, standing as much in fear of a tariff, which would afford protection to Northern free labor, as they do of the opposition to slavery, give similar warning against the election of a Protectionist to the Presidency. It happens that MR. BUCHANAN is a 'sort of' Protectionist—as well as a Sectionalist of the worst sort—but there is no rupture of the Union."

[53] Bancroft, II, 463.

[54] Nov. 3, 1858. Similar sentiments were expressed Nov. 10. Several weeks later (Dec. 18), however, it was forecasting more accurately: "It seems to be pretty well settled out West that the Republicans of all that region, will under no circumstances, advocate the nomination of Senator Seward for the Presidency. Indeed, the leaders of that party in the West and North-West are bitterly opposed to the sage of Auburn, and no appliances in the possession of the Dictator can soften down the hostility of these men and convert them into friends.

"The reasons alleged for this hostility to Mr. Seward are two, namely: his and his friends' efforts to secure Douglas's reelection by inducing the Illinois Republicans to drop Lincoln and go in for the Little Giant: and second, the abolition heresies of his famous Rochester speech.

"This state of feeling in the West and North-West will probably prove fatal to Mr. Seward's candidacy. But in case he should be nominated it will almost certainly insure his defeat. The Republicans of this State may as well make up their mind to taking a subordinate position in the General Council of their party—the more especially, because the anti-Seward feeling in their own ranks is more than sufficient to effect the wiping out of the meagre majority for the Republican ticket in November last. When the issue shall be a distinctly *personal* one, Mr. Seward will be distanced."

There seems to be no doubt that northern and southern extremists and political foes of Seward seized upon the Rochester speech as a means of whipping up the very reaction which Seward forecast and which they desired: an increase in disunionist sentiment, or, at the very least, an increased fear that such was the Republican party's aim. The "moderate" Senator James N. Hammond of North Carolina, after reading the Rochester speech, wrote to William Porcher Miles: "It is glorious. We have got them dead. . . . In other words, it is emancipation or disunion after 1860, unless Seward is repudiated."[57] Senator Iverson of Georgia joyously hailed the speech as a declaration of war against slavery, and warned the South it would have to choose between slavery and the Union.[58] Jefferson Davis carried on the campaign with a speech to the Mississippi legislature on November 16, 1858, in which he denounced Seward as a dangerous and powerful man and attacked the doctrine of "irrepressible conflict" as a threat to amend the Constitution and to abolish slavery. The Little Rock (Arkansas) *State Gazette and Democrat* added to the excitement of its readers by calling Seward "an unscrupulous politician," who delivered the Rochester speech "knowing that the advocacy of slavery is unpopular."[59] Salmon P. Chase's friends rejoiced in the belief that the Rochester speech had injured Seward's chances for the 1860 nomination.[60] Gideon Welles denounced the speech in the November 15 issue of the New York *Evening News*. The New York *Herald* described it as a "brutal and bloody manifesto."[61] Later, when John Brown raided Harper's

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[55] "William H. Seward in the Campaign of 1860, with Special Reference to Michigan," *Michigan History Mag.*, XIX (1935), 94.

[56] "Pontiac," from Lexington, Ky., in *The New York Times*, Nov. 18, 1858.

[57] Nov. 5, 1858 (Miles Papers, Univ. of North Carolina Library).

[58] *Cong. Globe*, 35th Cong., 2nd Sess., p. 243.

[59] Nov. 12, 1858. This was an extremist paper which boasted (Nov. 27, 1858) of being one of only two newspapers in Arkansas to advocate reopening of the slave trade.

[60] Albert Bushnell Hart, *Salmon Portland Chase* (Boston, 1899), pp. 180–181.

[61] Quoted by Syracuse *Daily Standard* (Dec. 1, 1858), which also cited similar sentiments from the Albany *Atlas and Argus* and the Washington *Union*.

Ferry, the *Herald* unblushingly printed news of the raid side by side with a reprint of Seward's Rochester speech.

The pro-Republican Washington (Pennsylvania) weekly *Reporter* made no mention of the Rochester address until its issue of December 1, when it printed the text without comment on page one. In its December 8 issue, the *Reporter* editorialized as follows:

> Senator Seward's speech has got down South with various amendments and additions to suit the latitude. The *Mississippian* quotes the following as Seward's own words: "Let us anticipate the blow by invading the States of South Carolina and Georgia, and emancipating the laborer who is toiling on the plantations there. The two principles cannot live. Either slavery must triumph and become universal, or emancipation must be carried into every State. If the South lives, the North must die. Then down with the South, *Delenda est Carthago*. And if the compact of the Confederation stands in the way, *tear it to pieces. There is no faith to be kept up with slaveholders.* In politics that only is obligatory which is expedient."[62]

Other papers, too, printed this *Mississippian* distortion as evidence of how some "Southern journals . . . have misrepresented what [Seward] said, and still others have resorted to downright forgery to create prejudice against one of the most eminent statesmen of the age."[63]

An anonymous correspondent in *The New York Times*, for November 9, 1858, called Seward's "irrepressible conflict" doctrine "a cloaked and cunning avowal of his intention to agitate against Slavery wherever it exists, no matter what interests may be threatened or what peace disturbed. . . . It is a determined and relentless crusade against law and order." The Democratic *American Volunteer* similarly hailed the Rochester speech as finally unmasking the Republican intent of attacking slavery "over the prostrate body of the Constitution and the prostrate interests of the country."[64]

In a moderate and carefully reasoned editorial in *The New York Times*, Raymond declared that the Rochester speech actually did no more than to reaffirm Seward's belief that slavery was, in the natural course of events, doomed to extinction—"and if Gov. Seward means no more than this, few would doubt the justice of his remark. At the same time we cannot help thinking that he would allay a great deal of very natural alarm in one quarter, and solve a good many disturbing and perplexing doubts in others, by being somewhat more explicit upon a point of such vital interest and importance. Without explanation he stands before the country as advocating the direct and effective interference of the Federal Government for the abolition of Slavery in the Southern States—and it is this, more than anything else, which has made his name an object of so much terror to the South."[65]

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[62] The *Reporter's* editor was so pleased with this extract from the *Mississippian* that he printed it again (Jan. 5, 1859).

[63] Rochester *Democrat and American*, Dec. 13, and Syracuse *Daily Standard*, Dec. 21, 1858.

[64] Published in Carlisle, Pa., vol. 45, no. 24, n.d.

In view of this storm of resentment aroused by the Rochester address, Allan Nevins seems justified in his conclusion that Seward's " 'higher law' speech in 1850 was not only poor politics but bad statesmanship, and the 'irrepressible conflict' address of 1858 was still more unfortunate."[66] Nevertheless, the speech had many defenders and admirers. Lincoln, with typical caution, declared that "I agree with Seward's 'irrepressible conflict,' but not with his 'higher law' doctrine."[67] W. H. "Billy" Herndon wrote Seward approving the Rochester speech and urging that he make more like it: "seize some golden opportunity . . . to open, blossom lik[e], this flower of Rhetoric."[68] That this sentiment was less than frank is suggested by Theodore Parker's letter to Herndon, written November 13, 1858, in which he says, "I don't agree with you as to Seward . . . his two speeches at Rochester and at Rome don't look like lowering the platform. He never spoke so bold and brave before. He quite outruns his party, and no Republican paper in New England, I fear, has dared to republish them."[69] Horace Greeley, on October 28, 1858, introduced his *Tribune* readers to the Rochester speech with this endorsement: "We need hardly urge our readers to a careful perusal of the speech of Gov. Seward, delivered at Rochester on Monday evening, which we print in full this morning. With the instinct of a statesman, the speaker discards all minor, temporary and delusive issues, and treats only of what is final and essential. Clear, calm, sagacious, profound and impregnable, showing a masterly comprehension of the present aspects and future prospects of the great question which now engrosses our politics, this speech will be pondered by every thoughtful man in the land, and confirm the eminence so long maintained by its author." The editor of the Syracuse *Daily Standard* defended it in his issue of December 1 by reprinting the "irrepressible conflict" paragraph and pointing out that its sentiments conformed to the views of the founding fathers and also to the doctrines of the great southern advocate, John C. Calhoun.[70]

Other editorial comment proved that there was still will and ability to discuss even the slavery question dispassionately and fairly. The Philadelphia *Press* for November 2, 1858 devoted almost two columns to a judicious analysis of the speech in which the editor disagreed with Seward's fear that slavery would continue to crowd upon the area of free labor, and also disagreed that there need be any irrepressible conflict. "The true solution of the slavery question," wrote the editor, reminding his readers of Webster's March 7, 1850, compromise program, "is to place it entirely under the control of the people of the different localities. . . . A uniformity may or may not occur in the lapse of future ages." In any event, the chief danger to be avoided was the continuance of purely sectional political parties. The editor of the Frankfort (Kentucky) *Commonwealth* read Seward's speech and then inquired, "But where is the violation of the constitutional rights of the slaveholder which is said to be shadowed forth in his speech? We have not discovered it. All of his previous efforts have repudiated the idea. The speech is simply the speculation of a fervid brain rather given to indulging in such illusory phantasies in connection with this subject. But it contains no lurking design to subvert southern institutions by other means than the force of what the speaker chooses to consider philosophy and reason, acting upon the minds of southern men."[71] Similarly, the Louisville (Kentucky) *Journal* advised its readers:

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[65] Oct. 28, 1858. So far as has been discovered this is the earliest editorial recognition of the enormous effect to be exerted by the Rochester speech.

[66] Nevins, *Emergence of Lincoln*, I, 22.

[67] Burton Hendrick, *Bulwark of the Republic* (Boston, 1937), p. 342.

[68] David Donald, *Lincoln's Herndon* (New York, 1948), p. 132.

[69] John Weiss, *Life and Correspondence of Theodore Parker* (New York, 1864), II, 243. Parker's abolitionist sentiments had long been urged upon Seward, as illustrated in a letter Parker wrote him (May 19, 1854) saying, "Freedom and slavery . . . are hostile in nature, and therefore mutually invasive." (*Ibid.*, II, 206.)

[70] The *Daily Standard* (Nov. 8, 1858) reprinted a ringing defense of the speech from Greeley's *Tribune*, declaring that "the whole theory of this alarming speech" is merely the old doctrine that Slavery should not be forced upon the territories by federal law.

> The proposition is perfectly innocent. It is, in fact, but the reproduction in somewhat sharper form, of a pet idea of Mr. Clay's. Nothing could be further from the harrowing import with which distempered or designing fancies have invested it. The notion belongs wholly to the realm of ideas. It does not contemplate a plan of action, but merely a scheme of natural development. It is a speculation, not a project,—the outline of a conviction, not of a campaign.—It is a mere forecast of events. It is Mr. Seward's theory of our national progression. It is his judgment as to what will happen in the ordinary course of things. It is simply a harmless bit of Republican philosophy. No doubt it is very chimerical, and no doubt, it is cherished religiously by nearly all good Republicans; but chimeras are not criminal, they are not even dangerous, and, whether they are or not, all good Southern Democrats are chock full of them.[72]

Despite the host of other notable spokesmen in the slavery debate, the "irrepressible conflict" speech continued to be a principal subject of debate around the country. Attempts by Seward's friends to show that the idea was nothing new[73] were brushed aside by Raymond as an attempt to save Seward's reputation without regard to the validity of the views expressed.[74] John R. White published an attack upon abolition in 1860 in a pamphlet, with the title, *The End of the Irrepressible Conflict.*[75] Seward's speeches at Detroit, on September 4, 1860, were interpreted as "but a re-amplification of the Rochester speech."[76] Concerning one Detroit speech the Chicago *Tribune* said, "Governor Seward steps squarely up to the line of the 'irrepressible conflict', but serenely, gently and with the confidence of one who knew well the ground he stands on and feels sure of it."[77] The Louisville (Kentucky) *Daily Journal* for August 22, 1860 was still referring to "the famous Rochester speech, which created such a profound sensation throughout the Southern portion of the Republic." To the Indianapolis *Daily Journal,* on December 14, 1860, "a grander idea never was uttered than that of Seward's 'irrepressible conflict'. . . . There is an 'irrepressible conflict' of principle." The pro-Breckinridge New York *Daily News,* on the contrary, in its issue of January 9, 1861, considered that Seward's dogma "spits compromise in the face, and stands boldly for all or nothing." Samuel Medary's new journal, *Crisis,* proclaimed in its second issue, February 7, 1861, that Seward fully realized his Rochester ideas "must lead to the sad consequences that are now passing before our eyes . . . he did look to a division of these States into two confederacies as the end, if not the aim, of the triumph of his party." The always unfriendly New York *Herald* crowed in 1861, on April 11, that Seward's "suicidal programme" was bearing its natural fruit. And Seward's old adversary, President James Buchanan, recorded in his memoirs that Seward, as "the acknowledged head and leader of the Republican party . . . was much more of a politician than a statesman. Without strong convictions, he understood the art of preparing in his closet, and uttering before the public, antithetical sentences well calculated both to inflame the ardor of his anti-slavery friends and to exasperate his pro-slavery opponents. If he was not the author of the 'irrepressible conflict', he appropriated it to himself and converted it to a party oracle. He thus aroused passions, probably without so intending, which it was beyond his power afterwards to control."[78]

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[71] Quoted by Syracuse *Daily Standard*, Dec. 21, 1858.

[72] Quoted approvingly by Rochester *Democrat and American* (Nov. 23, 1858), which pointed out that "this rebuke comes in good time, to demolish the phantom of civil war, and quiet the excitement." The editor noted that similar sentiments were expressed by the Missouri *Democrat*, Cincinnati *Gazette*, and others. Precisely the opposite view was held by the rival Rochester *Union and Advertiser*, which editorialized (Nov. 13, 1858) that "Senator Seward's Rochester Speech continues to be animadverted upon by the press in various sections of the country. The thinly veiled crusade against the South which he preached on this occasion will find fewer and still fewer sympathizers as Reason gradually resumes her sway over the People whom political excitement had temporarily led astray." The Boston *Journal* agreed that Seward "is always uttering something abominable." (Quoted in Rochester *Democrat and American*, Nov. 22, 1858.)

Seward himself apparently realized very quickly the storm which he had inadvertently raised, and its dangers to his own political ambitions. In his speech at Rome, just four days after the Rochester address, he sought to deny that he foresaw any danger of conflict. He was notably conciliatory in his comments on the southern slaveholders, pointing out that they merely desired to hold what they had, whereas it was northern Democrats who sought to force an extension of slave territory. The Rome speech was printed in *The New York Times* on November 4, the Albany Evening *Journal* of November 4, and in the New York *Tribune* on November 6,[79] but wholly failed to still the rising clamor. For the rest of his life Seward tried to live down the reputation which was crystallized by his speech at Rochester. In his speech in the Senate on February 29, 1860, he tried to allay fears that he was an agitator. Turning toward the southern Senators, he declared, "We do not seek to force, or even to intrude, our system on you. . . . Each must be maintained in order that the whole may be preserved." To the English historian, Ephraim Douglass Adams, it appeared that Seward did play a notable role as a conciliator, working for reconciliation of the sections.[80] But the damage to Seward's political career was irreparable. The abolitionists gathered him to their bosoms and would not let him go.[81] "Irrepressible conflict" became, for Seward's political ambition, "irretrievable disaster."

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[73] Seward, I, 352; see also the column "from our own correspondent" in Washington, New York *Tribune,* Nov. 9, and an item comparing Seward's views with Washington's, Rochester *Democrat and American,* December 15, 1858.

[74] *The New York Times,* Nov. 10, 1858.

[75] Printed by King and Baird, Philadelphia, Nov. 5, 1860; published anonymously as by a Merchant of Philadelphia.

[76] Collier, p. 101.

[77] Collier, p. 103.

[78] *Mr. Buchanan's Administration on the Eve of the Rebellion* (New York, 1866), p. 57.

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[79] Greeley pointed out that Seward's Rome speech made clear that "he does not in any manner desire that the pernicious institution should be removed by the unconstitutional interference of the Federal Government, as has falsely been charged upon him."

[80] *Great Britain and the American Civil War* (New York, 1925), II, 257.

[81] See manuscript letters in the collection of Seward Papers (Rush Rhees Library, Univ. of Rochester), from which quotation is not authorized, from T. C. Leland, New York, Nov. 1, 1858; George E. Baker, Court of Appeals, Albany, Nov. 4, 1858; Chester Harding, St. Louis, Nov. 5, 1858; Hobart Berrian, Washington, Nov. 9 and Nov. 15, 1858; Josiah Quincy, Boston, Nov. 10, 1858; George Harris, Baltimore, Nov. 12, 1858; Timothy Jenkins, Baltimore, Nov. 12, 1858; G. W. Palmer, Plattsburgh, N.Y., Nov. 12, 1858; J. C. Underwood, American Emigrant and Homestead Co., New York, Nov. 12, 1858; and Theodore Parker, Boston, Nov. 15, 1858.

Jefferson Davis, Sectional Diplomat, 1858

RALPH RICHARDSON

3

When the first session of the Thirty-fifth Congress adjourned in June, 1858, a number of Democrats hurried home to justify their political behavior. They had need to do so, for the debates on the admission of Kansas, with its proslavery Lecompton Constitution, supported by Buchanan's administration and opposed by Senator Stephen A. Douglas, had forced several party members into positions which the sanguine viewed as delicate and the morbid as fatal. In the coming fall elections, some Democratic heads were sure to be bloodied; a few might even be rolled.

Senator Jefferson Davis of Mississippi faced no such hazard in a personal sense. In the thinking of the Mississippi legislature, his Lecomptonite stand on Kansas was sound. Moreover, a severe illness had so limited his attendance in the Senate that he had hardly had the occasion to do himself political injury.[1] Governed, then, by critical health, and fearing no weak fences at home, Davis chose to spend the summer on the malaria-free coast of New England, going there, as he later solemnly explained to a Mississippi audience, "with such feelings as the wounded elk leaves his herd, and seeks the covert, to die alone."[2] But in a few weeks, after the down-east breezes of Maine had worked their restorative powers upon him, he rejoined the herd, this time very much alive, somewhat voluble, and most Democratic. Election-year party rallies were at hand, providing him with frequent invitations to speak. As soon, however, as he ascended his first New England stump, his motives were questioned. How came he there? Why should any Southerner of his prominence be speaking in the North so near to 1860, unless he was eyeing the presidency, or intent upon guarding that office against assumption by

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[1] During the spring of the year Davis was beset by a series of fever attacks of unknown cause. He was in danger of losing his sight and had spent seven weeks in a darkened room of his Washington, D.C., home. Such contact as he had with Capitol Hill had come from the service of messengers and through briefing visits by southern congressmen.

[2] From a speech in Jackson, Nov. 11, in Jackson *Mississippian and State Gazette*, Nov. 17, 1858.

Douglas? Particularly did these questions seem fitting to some in view of the many overtures toward political friendship which cropped up in his Maine and Massachusetts speeches. The senator was saying kind words about the Yankee, and below the Mason-Dixon line doubt and open dissatisfaction grew as the accounts filtered southward. Had it been illness and pain, or a light touch of Pennsylvania Avenue fever which took him northward? Was not the recovery of his health as remarkably rapid as the convalescence of Senator Sumner was unduly prolonged? Could it be "that the flesh pots of place," as one Georgia editor feared, "had seduced him from the paths of States Rights and State Sovereignty?"[3] On the other hand, there were his supporters, who saw in him a solitary invalid, "shattered in the service of his country," still bravely carrying the gospel to heathen lands.[4] From out of these differing opinions came heated editorial skirmishes as the press, North and South, freely applied labels of praise and blame to Mississippi's senator summering in New England. He was a Union patriot, a traitor, a long-winded presidential nag, an arch foe of Douglas, a Douglasite, a secessionist, and a true southern gentleman.

But of these, no label is sufficiently apt. The real Davis of 1858 is to be found between the one extreme of crediting him with messianic qualities of national statesmanship, and a second, given currency by the feelings of the next decade, of classifying him among the devils of disunion. In the middle ground there is a Davis who looked upon himself as a friendly Mississippian speaking to an attentive northern democracy, less for personal reasons than for the over-all benefit of the South.[5] Especially is one led to place Davis in this middle position in the absence of any evidence to suggest that presidential ambition or hostility to Douglas ranked above his desire to keep both peace and slavery in the Union.[6] Thus, at face value, his speeches appear as

[3] Columbus *Times,* in Jackson *Mississippian,* Sept. 8, 1858.

[4] Jackson *Mississippian,* Oct. 20, 1858.

[5] Three months after he left the North, Davis wrote to ex-President Pierce, saying: "I am gratified by the view you take of my New England tour. The abolitionists and the Disunionists combined to assail me for the speeches made there. I hope the Southern assailants have been scotched and the others may rail on to their content. That tour convinced me that the field of useful labor is now among the people and that temperate, true men could effect much by giving to the opposite section the views held by the other. The difference is less than I had supposed." (Davis to Pierce, January 17, 1859, in Dunbar Rowland, *Jefferson Davis: Constitutionalist, His Letters, Papers and Speeches* [Jackson, 1923] III, 498; hereafter this ten-volume collection is cited as Rowland, *Davis Papers.*)

[6] The published letters of Davis, mainly appearing in Rowland's *Davis Papers,* reveal no meaningful symptoms of presidential ambition. Nor do the letters of the summer and fall of 1858 give any indication that Davis was motivated by anti-Douglas feelings during his sojourn in the North. No further insight into his activities at this time is to be found in *The Correspondence of Robert Toombs, A. H. Stephens, and Howell Cobb*, Ulrich B. Phillips, ed., American Historical Association, *Annual Report,* 1911, II (Washington, 1913). Allan Nevins (*The Emergence of Lincoln* [New York, 1950], I, 418) observes he has found no evidence of any correspondence between Davis, A. G. Brown, Yancey, Wise, and others on methods of checking Douglas in 1858. Moreover,

part of a more or less spontaneous effort to promote sectional harmony, mainly by ethical proofs, before northern audiences. If he could win northern Democratic acceptance of a states' rights argument protective of the status of slavery, he might succeed in keeping the party united—on his terms at least—if not in power. Davis, working as a sectional diplomat within the Democratic party, spoke as Mississippi's ambassador to New England, a role not difficult to understand during the vogue of extremes in states' rights reasoning.

Whatever view one takes of Davis' motives, it is patent that his northern tour drew sufficient attention to make him and his speeches a factor of significance in the years immediately preceding the Civil War. As a man and as a speaker he had the standing necessary to attract audiences and to have his speeches widely circulated. An understanding, then, of his efforts at diplomacy should contribute an integral, albeit small, part to an understanding of why a sectionally disturbed nation gave up words and turned to war. It would, of course, be an overstatement of the man's importance if too much weight were assigned to his speeches as a cause of either hastening or delaying fraternal conflict. Yet his diplomatic efforts, particularly as undertaken in Boston's Faneuil Hall and in Jackson, Mississippi, did contribute to the formation of opinion in 1858.

DAVIS IN FANEUIL HALL, A TAME LION, OCTOBER 11, 1858

It is difficult to think of Jefferson Davis in any other historical perspective than as president of the Confederacy, 1861–1865. When, however, the focus is turned back to 1858, there is little suggestion of folly in the behavior of the Boston Democrats who featured him at a rally in the Cradle of Liberty. Davis was in good standing with Buchanan's administration. Aside from winning local elections, New England Democrats had a need for proper social deportment before visitors of Davis' eminence if they wished to share the

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the unpublished letters of Davis, held in the Huntington Library, the Mississippi Archives at Jackson, the Newberry Collection, and several repositories in Boston, do not suggest either presidential ambition or connivance against Douglas. In a positive sense, there is considerable evidence that Davis' trip to New England and his political speeches delivered there were a function of health pressures and unpremeditated circumstances. As late as April Davis was seriously thinking of taking a long ocean voyage to Europe in order to convalesce, as shown in a letter to Franklin Pierce, in Rowland, *Davis Papers*, III, 215. When, however, he at last decided to go to New England, he passed up an excellent opportunity to use the organized Democrats of Philadelphia as a political sounding board, when he wrote that ill health prevented him from accepting their invitation to be a featured speaker at a July Fourth rally (see Davis to John Robbins, and others, *ibid.*, p. 270). Therefore, short of indulging in the vagaries of historical divination and mind-reading, it is wisest to interpret the Davis of 1858 as he announced himself to be, that is, an ill man who became well enough to accept speaking invitations tendered by friendly New England Democrats. To be sure, it is hard to imagine that any man of senatorial status is capable of disabusing his mind of presidential longings. But if Davis had this goal he warily concealed the private evidence of it from both his contemporaries and subsequent students of history.

fruits of patronage.[7] Then, too, the party, with little hope for victory, could afford to gamble on daring techniques to win votes. The Mississippi senator, through his reputation and rhetoric, might well add strength to their claim that the Democratic party was the only one with national breadth and the promise of national unity.

The breadth and unity of the Democratic party proved to be no talisman of victory in the Massachusetts election; yet it was the best available means of persuasion. Under pressure as they were from the moral enthusiasm of the Republican-abolition group and the fanatical pure-stock "Americanism" of the Know-Nothings, the Democrats could do little else than present themselves as the champions of national harmony. "Preserve the Union" became their banner as they campaigned in appeal to the conservative elements in the Massachusetts electorate. Many ex-Whigs, with an obvious residual attachment to the status quo, spoke as Democrats, or at least in support of the ticket. Notables such as Edward Everett, Caleb Cushing, Robert C. Winthrop, Benjamin F. Butler, and Rufus Choate wrote letters and made speeches, charging the abolitionists and Republicans with a disregard for the Union, the Constitution, and the teachings of "The Fathers." In turn, the abolitionists and Republicans charged the Democrats with being the party of slavery aggression and, should the aggression fail, the party of secession and disunion.[8] Against this political backdrop of charges and countercharges of disunionism, it becomes more apparent why the Democrats should feature the Mississippian in Faneuil Hall. If they could make a favorable exhibit of Davis, the sectional symbol of the sins of which the Republicans had made so much,[9] it would reinforce their claim that only the Democratic party could preserve national harmony. In short, Davis was being paraded before New England voters in the role of a tame lion.

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[7] The leadership of the party had been kept conveniently small, charged the New York *Tribune* (Oct. 11, 1858), "so that the Treasury pap should not be wasted on the unworthy."

[8] Choate and Everett had started the Union campaign early with Fourth of July speeches before Democratic clubs. The *Atlantic Monthly* replied to Choate by belittling his rhetoric and concepts in an article entitled "The Pocket-Celebration of the Fourth" (II [Aug., 1858], 374–382); Theodore Parker, privately, at least, crossed off Everett's speech by calling him a liar (Parker to Thomas W. Higginson, July 9 [Higginson MSS., Huntington Library]). Cushing, too, promoted the Constitution and Union campaign in a long letter expressing his regret and inability to attend the festival honoring Speaker of the House Orr, in South Carolina. As had Choate, Cushing got his comeuppance from the *Atlantic Monthly* in "A Sample of Consistency" (II [Nov., 1858], 750–763). Winthrop, at the invitation of Democratic party chairman Isaac Wright, provided a letter, saying: "I have an unchangeable conviction that intemperate Anti-Slavery agitation has been the source of a very large part of the troubles by which our country has been disturbed and harassed for some years past." To this, the New York *Tribune* (Nov. 3, 1858) replied, terming Winthrop "a gentleman who lives in a very genteel square in a very genteel locality in the very genteel city of Boston. Quite *up*, you must know. Miles away from vulgar people. In a very good house. . . . And two cloaks. . . . That this gentleman upon the eve of an election should shuffle himself from his genteel shelf, and write a refined letter in defence of genteel politics . . . [is news]." For more on the topics and insults of the campaign of 1858, see Boston *Liberator*, July 16; Robert C. Winthrop, Jr., *A Memoir of Robert C. Winthrop* (Boston, 1897).

[9] Earlier in the year, John A. Andrew, a Republican leader who was to gain recog-

The role was not difficult to establish. From the moment he entered New England waters, aboard the *Joseph Whitney*, Davis had been expressing Union sentiments. At sea on July 4, two days before his ship docked in Boston, he announced that "this great country will continue united. Trifling politicians in the South, or in the North, or in the West may continue to talk otherwise, but it will be to no avail. They are like the mosquitoes around the ox; they annoy, but they cannot wound, and never kill."[10] The Constitution, "The Fathers," and the Union had been his themes as he spoke throughout Maine.[11] Sectional hostility he decried; mutual sympathy and growth toward prosperity for both sections he endorsed. On slavery he had attempted to be discreetly politic, contending that its presence in Mississippi and absence in Maine resulted from differences in climate and soil, not morals. To be sure, he never failed to assert his belief in the slaveholder's constitutional right to enter any of the federal territories. But, when a qualification of this asserted right promised aid to Maine Democrats, Davis was willing to tack to the winds of local needs. At Portland, September 11, to counter Republican charges, he admitted that slavery could not be forced upon any region against the will of its people.[12] His language resembled Douglas' at Freeport in explaining the efficacy of "unfriendly legislation" by territorial governments. In Mississippi, his words were to be called heretical, but here in Maine they might be helpful to hard-pressed Democrats. In all this he was well received. Bowdoin College conferred an LL.D. upon him.[13] Portland's

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nition as the Civil War governor of Massachusetts, had sought to organize a political case against Caleb Cushing, by linking him with Davis. "But, in several hours search last Sunday P.M. and evening, I c'd not find the evidence of Jeff. Davis' disunionism. I wish you w'd refer me to his declarations, and to those of Toombs and other leading disunionists of the Democratic party." (Andrew to Charles Sumner, Feb. 9, 1858, in Henry Greenleaf Pearson, *The Life of John A. Andrew* [Boston, 1904], I, 75.)

[10] Speech during a shipboard celebration, as reported from the memory of a fellow passenger (Boston *Post*, July 7, 1858).

[11] There were speeches in Portland, Belfast, and Augusta; see *Speeches of the Hon. Jefferson Davis, of Mississippi, Delivered During the Summer of 1858* (Baltimore, 1859); Rowland, *Davis Papers*, III, 274 *passim*. For newspaper texts and comments, see Boston *Post*, July 13, Sept. 27; Portland (Me.) *Advertiser*, Aug. 28, 30; Portland *Eastern Argus*, Aug. 28, 1858.

[12] It is meet to present Davis' language: "If the inhabitants of any territory would refuse to enact such laws and police regulations as would give security to their property or to his, it would be rendered more or less valueless, in proportion to the difficulty of holding it without such protection. In the case of property in the labor of man, or what is usually called slave property, the insecurity would be so great that the owner could not ordinarily retain it. Therefore, though the right would remain, the remedy being withheld, it would follow that the owner would be practically debarred by the circumstances of the case, from taking slave property into a territory where the sense of the inhabitants was opposed to its introduction. So much for the oft repeated fallacy of forcing slavery upon any community." (Rowland, *Davis Papers*, III, 299.)

[13] More than a gratuitous gesture of honor may have been involved here. The Portland (Me.) *Advertiser*, on Aug. 17, 1858, without direct identification, professed to see

Eastern Argus reported and approved his speeches. Bennett's New York *Herald*, in announcing that "the honorable Senator has evidently made a hit down in Maine," was glad to see him "dealing out Democracy to benighted Aroostooks."[14]

Accordingly, most Democrats were pleased to fete him upon his return to Boston at summer's end. Everett, Cushing, and Winthrop entertained him in their homes. On Saturday, October 9, two days before the rally in Faneuil Hall, Boston's Mayor Lincoln took him on an inspection tour of the harbor, which ended as Davis, a proper pilgrim, stopped for a "brief visit to the tomb and late residence of Daniel Webster at Marshfield."[15] In the evening he became the honored guest in the home of the editor of the Democratic Boston *Post*, when

> 120 gentlemen met by invitation at Col. Greene's residence on Blackstone square, to exchange civilities with Mississippi's gallant son. . . . The company [Mayor Lincoln, Postmaster Capen, Collector Austin, Sidney Webster, B. F. Hallett and assorted luminaries] having been introduced to the guest of the evening, a splendid collation was served, and after two hours' most agreeable social converse, the distinguished visitor retired and the *reunion* broke up, leaving on the minds of all the participants the most agreeable impressions.[16]

On Monday morning the *Post* advertised the evening's fare, presenting Davis as a veteran Democrat, than whom "no man is heard with more respect or profit," and advising "all who wish to get into Faneuil Hall tonight to go early, for the number of auditors will only be limited by the size of the hall."[17] The call was heeded and "the Cradle of Liberty was filled to overflowing."[18] Present were Everett, Cushing, Winthrop, and "a large proportion of the intelligent conservative element of Boston,"[19] met to ratify the party platform and slate. Before this group, Erasmus Beach, Democratic candidate for governor, set the scene for national love feasting. Defending the South against the Republicans, he said: "They assign to the South in-

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the unseen hand of ex-President Pierce, Bowdoin alumnus, in whose cabinet Davis had been Secretary of War. At any rate, Bowdoin was not a little embarrassed following 1861. Some years later, when Bowdoin College was in financial distress, the Bates College *Student* suggested it should apply to its honorary alumnus for Confederate money and stamps. See Louis Clinton Hatch, *History of Bowdoin College* (Portland, 1927), pp. 116–117.

[14] Sept. 15, 1858.

[15] Boston *Transcript*, Oct. 11, 1858. Apparently, within six years after his death, Whig Daniel Webster was undergoing canonization even by the Democrats of New England.

[16] Boston *Transcript*, Oct. 11, 1858.

[17] Oct. 11, 1858.

[18] Boston *Transcript*, Oct. 12, 1858. Between 1806 and 1898, Faneuil Hall was unchanged in size and arrangement. In the main room where Davis spoke the dimensions were seventy-six by seventy-six by twenty-six feet. Abram E. Brown (*Faneuil Hall and Faneuil Hall Market* [Boston, 1900], p. 161) estimates the capacity to have been eight hundred people. It is not clear whether his estimate includes gallery seating space.

[19] So described by Claude M. Fuess, *The Life of Caleb Cushing* (New York, 1923), II, 224.

fluence and power she never possessed, and then make her responsible for acts she never committed. There is no foundation for this miserable cry of aggression and monopoly on the part of the slave States. The aggressions are by the North upon the South."[20]

Then Cushing, who had served four years with Davis in Pierce's cabinet, rose to present the featured speaker. For well over twenty minutes he was, as the Salem *Register* protested, "terribly in love with Democracy, and couldn't find words powerful enough to express his conviction 'that in the Democratic party, and in that alone, is the tower of strength for the liberties, the peace and the honor of these United States.' He was also greatly distressed about the 'sectionalism' of the Republicans." But, when he turned to "the especial god of his idolatry,"[21] his words came easily as he presented "a citizen of the Southern States, eloquent among the eloquent in debate, wise among the wisest in council, and brave among the bravest in the battlefield (tremendous cheering); a citizen of a Southern State ('good, good') who knows that he can associate with you, the representative of the democracy and the nationality of Massachusetts; that he can associate with you on equal footing with the fellow-citizens and common members of these United States."[22] When Davis took the stand, "those who held seats in the galleries rose *en masse*, and joined with those standing on the lower floor in extending a cordial, very cordial greeting to the honored guest from Mississippi."[23]

Davis began with an assertion of the nationality of the Democratic party, saying the Democratic heart beat the same upon any parallel of latitude throughout the United States.[24] Turning next to topics suggested by the Faneuil Hall setting, he praised Massachusetts' Revolutionary War leaders, pictured on the walls, and interpreted their motives as deriving from a desire to establish "community independence." He was cheered, for even a cautious Boston audience was obliged to respond to any graceful obeisance before its heroes. But soon, as he extended the meaning of "community independence," Davis won strong applause by implying that Samuel Adams and John Hancock, if living, would be states' rights Democrats. To this assembly of Democrats of long standing, Whigs who had embraced the party as a refuge for their conservatism, and a legion of federal officeholders, the premise was apparently acceptable.[25] Confident, then, in his analysis of his audience, Davis announced that the Democratic party was fighting in defense of principles made sacred by the Revolutionary Fathers. Again he drew cheers, and he doubtlessly could feel that the argument served two of his immediate purposes: First, as a Democrat, he wished to contribute to the strength of his chosen party in Massachusetts. Second, as a states' rights Democrat, he was further interested in seeing that the Massachusetts wing of the party should gain strength only while adhering to his view of correct doctrine. Therefore, for the success of the party in Massachusetts, he identified it with the patriots of 1776; for the satisfaction of the party in Mississippi, he identified the patriots of 1776 with states' rights.

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[20] Boston *Transcript*, Oct. 12, 1858.

[21] Salem *Register*, Oct. 14, 1858.

[22] Varina Davis (*Jefferson Davis, A Memoir* [New York, 1890], I, 595–608) has published the full text of Cushing's speech of introduction.

[23] Varina Davis, I, 608; Boston *Post*, Oct. 12, 1858.

[24] For the text of the speech the Boston *Post*, October 12, has been used. On Oct. 13, the *Post* said: "We trust none of our readers failed to examine the beautiful, well put and truly eloquent speech of Senator Davis, which we yesterday printed from a phonographic report. It is proper to state that it did not meet the revisory eye of its author." In revised and slightly varied forms, the speech may be found in Davis, *Speeches of 1858*, pp. 29–39; Rowland, *Davis Papers*, III, 315–332; and Varina Davis, I, 608–641. All quoted but unidentified excerpts of the speech used in this study are taken from the *Post* text.

This assumption of a similarity in the beliefs of Faneuil Hall and southern Democrats was not unfounded. A basis for it had been established earlier in the evening by Cushing in his welcoming address, and by gubernatorial candidate Beach. In turn, Davis responded to Beach, saying: "I stand before you one of those who have always been called the ultra men of the South . . . and tell you that [Beach] has uttered tonight, everything which we have claimed as a principle for our protection. (Applause.). . . . I have found that [Northern Democrats] asserted the same broad Constitutional principle for which we have been contending, by which we are willing to live, for which we are willing to die! (Loud cheers and cries of "Good!")"

The "willing to die" phrase is significant, yet the notes from which Davis spoke do not show whether he intended to use it.[26] It may have grown from his excited reaction to the success of the speech. Or it may be that for sectional reasons, if not diplomatic, he planned just enough saber-rattling to give his hearers the occasion to argue the urgency of a Democratic victory, lest a Republican government should lead to civil strife.

Moving ahead to an attack upon the abolitionists, Davis maintained a note of urgency. If their fanaticism was not arrested, he told his audience, it would bring about "the destruction of that Union on which our hopes of future greatness depend." Surely they were fanatics, he contended, as he challenged their basic assumption and argued the defense of slavery by invoking the support of the Constitution, the Bible, the good of society, and even the good of the Negro. Therefore, he concluded, the abolitionists were "missionaries staying at home—reformers of things which they do not go to learn—preachers without an audience—overseers without laborers and without wages—warhorses who snuff the battle afar off, and cry 'Aha! aha! I am afar off.' [Great laughter and applause.]"

Interwoven with this invective against abolitionists was an assertion of the South's rights to carry slavery into any territory. The territories, Davis argued, were the common or jointly owned property of all the states. When the people of the states concluded that a territory was ready for statehood, it would be admitted to the "Union of equals" with its own laws governing the question of slavery. Until then, he reasoned, "the Constitution and the laws of the Union must be the rule governing within the limits of a territory. The Constitution recognizes all property—recognizes and protects all property, and gives equal privileges to every citizen of the States; and it would be a violation of its fundamental principles to attempt any distraction."

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[25] Or, as Garrison's Boston *Liberator* (Dec. 3, 1858) named them, "the miserable doughfaces in Boston."

[26] These notes may be found in photographic reproduction in Elizabeth Cutting, *Jefferson Davis, Political Soldier* (New York, 1930).

In terms of whatever conformity he owed to the beliefs of his Mississippi constituency Davis could feel he had spoken properly here in Boston. He had identified states' rights with patriotism, vintage 1776, had attacked the abolitionists, defended slavery, and asserted southern rights in the territories. And while these themes were applauded in Faneuil Hall, it would have been a fatuous Davis indeed who could believe them popular throughout New England. Short of disavowing the tenets which made his a minority view, he had to produce a miracle if his speech was to give political assistance to the outnumbered Democracy of Massachusetts. He did his best as he labored to picture a dream of national greatness, of a permanent and prosperous Union ever free of sectional discord. "I do not envy," he said, "the heart of that man whose pulse does not beat quicker and who does not feel within him a high exultation and pride in the past glory and future prospects of his country." If the agricultural South and the manufacturing North were to trade together in peace, it would make both sections of the Union "all the richer and all the happier." The future "points us to fraternity, to unity, to cooperation." These and similar passages were sufficiently fervent to make their author suspect to many southern fire-eaters. Yet their value in Massachusetts was limited, for to each Union appeal he attached a price tag: Democratic victory. This qualification he maintained to the end of the speech, as he personally thanked the people of New England for a friendly reception and called for the success of the Democratic party, "which alone is national, in which alone lies the hope of preserving the Constitution and the perpetuation of the government and of the blessings which it was ordained and established to secure."

The speech was well received. Presumably agreeable in content, it had also been agreeably presented. Davis, erect in bearing and dignified in manner, had spoken with directness and disciplined sincerity. "He seldom stormed, he seldom spoke loudly or impetuously," said Edward Pollard of him, adding, "but he often filled the hearts of his hearers with unspeakable passion . . . by that evidently forced moderation of tone and language which leaves to the power of suggestion much that expression declines to attempt, and is incapable of conveying."[27] Here in Faneuil Hall Davis spoke in the same pattern, yet he had not eschewed the use of skills in timing and force to produce climax. Bracketed notations in the text published by the Boston *Post* indicate he was interrupted fifty times by applause, great cheers, cries of "hear, hear," and laughter during the hour and a half he spoke. Privately reporting the event, Edward Everett wrote a friend that "Col. Jefferson Davis is here, addressing public meetings in a very friendly tone, and winning golden opinions from our democracy."[28] Even the politically hostile Boston *Advertiser* commented on the warmth of the response Davis had won from his audience; the New York *Tribune,* scarcely inclined to glorify Davis or his party, carried a story recognizing "the most enthusiastic character" of the Faneuil Hall meeting.[29]

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[27] Edward A. Pollard, *Life of Jefferson Davis with a Secret History of the Southern Confederacy* (Philadelphia, 1869), p. 33.

In direct appreciation, Boston's two Democratic papers, the *Courier* and the *Post,* praised the speaker and his speech. Specifically, the *Post* expressed its gratification that Davis had so thoroughly supplied the doctrine of states' rights with a groundwork drawn from Massachusetts "as she was in her national days—her Samuel Adams days." To be sure, some would be surprised that the foundation stones of states' rights could be hewed from colonial history, but, concluded the *Post,* "the deduction is strictly accurate."[30] In contrast, the Boston *Atlas and Bee,* more indignant than surprised, labeled the deduction an insult to the honored dead and the illustrious living of Massachusetts, adding that Davis would have met only hisses and scorn had not the courtesy of Bostonians and their love of free speech intervened.[31] All in all there was, as the Boston *Transcript* observed, much in Davis' speech "for the orators and writers of the opposite parties to discourse upon, the balance of the year."[32]

Conformably, the Republicans broke from the lethargy of confidence which had marked their campaign up to that time,[33] and returned the fire. Senator Henry Wilson, speaking on the thirteenth, replied:

> To listen to these gentlemen . . . at Faneuil Hall, a stranger would suppose that the people of this state, the 108,000 men who voted in 1856 for John C.

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[28] Everett to William Preston, Oct. 13, 1858 (Everett MSS., Massachusetts Historical Society).

[29] Boston *Advertiser,* Oct. 14; New York *Tribune,* Oct. 12. Not of primary significance so far as the effect of the speech was concerned was the quarrel which sprang up between the Boston *Post* and the Boston *Traveller* over Davis' Mexican War record. In introducing Davis, Cushing had credited him with genius in originating the "V" battle formation at Buena Vista. The *Traveller* contended that a British general had used the same maneuver years earlier. The *Post* denied it, whereupon the *Traveller* replied, "The whipped curs of the Boston Post . . . seek to cover its want of knowledge with lying." (*Traveller,* Oct. 19, 22, 1858.)

[30] Boston *Post,* Oct. 13; Jackson *Mississippian,* Oct. 27, 1858.

[31] *Atlas and Bee,* in Boston *Liberator,* Dec. 3, 1858.

[32] Oct. 14, 1858.

[33] Under date of the day of Davis' speech, the Boston correspondent of the New York *Tribune* wrote: "One thing, however, the Governor [Nathaniel P. Banks, Republican] is this year relieved from, and that is the necessity of 'stumping the State.' Though we are within about three weeks of the election, there has not been a single speech made on the Republican side. . . . We shall have a few speeches during the next three weeks, just enough to show that the 'gift of gab' has not died out from among us; but the contest does not promise to be very interesting." (*Tribune,* Oct. 14, 1858.)

> Frémont (cheers) were an ignorant, stolid and fanatical set of men, without character, without property, without anything that inspires respect and confidence. . . . I say here tonight, what the observation of every intelligent man here will sustain me in saying, that five-sixths of the educated men of Massachusetts, the graduates of your colleges, voted, in 1856, for John C. Frémont. I venture to say, here, tonight, that nine out of ten of the legal voters of this State who are members of the Protestant churches who voted at all, voted with us in 1856.[34]

Criticism of the speech was by no means confined to the North. In South Carolina, for the quite different reason that Davis had been insufficiently belligerent, Rhett's *Mercury* turned upon him, saying:

> The Hon. Jefferson Davis is rapidly being transformed into that species of fanatic appropriately called a Union Mormon. Throughout New England he has been feted and praised, under the impression produced by his speech at sea, and he returns the 'soft impeachment' by elaborate eulogies on the Union in general, and on Yankeedom in particular. So acceptable have been his offerings, that we see the Yankees have given him a sort of ovation in Faneuil Hall, in Boston. . . . What a fitting time for a State Rights, strict construction, slaveholding, Southern Democrat to appear amongst them, bandying compliments! How *apropos* these sophomorical eulogies of the Union on his patriot lips, and prayers, with up lifted eyes, from his full and enlarged heart, for its eternal duration![35]

In Virginia, however, Roger A. Pryor's influential Richmond *South* endorsed the speech, and defended Davis from Rhett's criticism, as well as from that likely to be leveled by Yancey and his League of United Southerners: "Jefferson Davis in Faneuil Hall! The 'League' will be absolutely paralyzed with horror. What, address a meeting of Bostonians, call them 'Fellow citizens,' and 'Brother-Democrats,' and that, too, in the very temple of Abolition phrenzy! . . . Yet, for all the vulgar vituperation of these self-constituted custodians of Southern rights, Senator Davis' speech at Faneuil Hall, on the 11th inst., will be received by every true Southern heart with the profoundest gratification."[36]

In Jackson, Editor Barksdale of the *Mississippian* became ecstatic: "Among all the efforts of Col. Davis this may be ranked with the best. The occasion demanded a great performance and the orator came fully up to its requirements. . . . There is no Mississippian who cherishes a true sentiment of State pride but will, on reading this address, feel his heart beat quicker and throb with a prouder emotion."[37]

It is impossible, if not presumptuous, to interpret the effect of the speech on the November election in Massachusetts. Republican Governor Banks was reelected by almost a two-to-one ratio over Beach. The Republicans won all of the eleven seats in Congress, thirty-seven of the forty in the state

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[34] From a speech before a Republican rally in City Hall, Charlestown, Mass., Oct. 13, reported in Boston *Transcript*, Oct. 14, 1858.

[35] Charleston *Mercury*, Oct. 16, 1858.

[36] In Jackson *Mississippian*, Nov. 3, 1858.

[37] Oct. 27, 1858.

Senate, and 197 of the 230 in the state House. Yet in Boston, where Davis had spoken, Banks led Beach by less than a hundred out of a total of more than eight thousand votes. That Davis' speech in any way contributed to the strength of the Democratic showing here can only be conjectured. Other factors, such as the normal party count in Boston, must also be weighed. But this much can be said: the appearance of Davis in Faneuil Hall seems not to have been political folly. In comparison with the campaign of 1857 the Democrats actually improved their status. They gained five thousand votes, received thirty-three per cent of the total ballots as against twenty-six per cent the preceding year, and moved from third to second ranking party.[38] Even so they remained a minority party in 1858. Preserve the Union, end sectional hostility, arrest fanaticism—all were unsuccessful appeals. The Republican-abolition group and the Know-Nothings fatally identified the Democratic party with the danger of slavery expansion, the ineptness of Buchanan, and the harboring of immigrant Irish. Choate, Winthrop, Everett, Cushing, Butler, and Davis could draw only one-third of the Massachusetts vote. With accuracy and vividness, Greeley's *Tribune* described their plight:

> Ah! that we should be compelled to record the failure of so much gallantry, self-sacrifice, letter-writing and speech-making. That lavender-scented aristocrats should get into bed with malodorous loafers—that nice nobility with unplugged nostrils should meander in mud and perambulate the dangerous districts to the utter ruin of its varnished boots—that Demosthenes, Hyperides, Cicero, Pitt and Canning (these eminent men still live in Boston, although popularly supposed by the rest of the world to be dead) should pour forth floods of eloquence . . . and all in vain.[39]

For Davis, however, it may not have been all in vain. Several Democratic papers mentioned him and Caleb Cushing as running mates in the presidential campaign of 1860. And at the Charleston convention some members of the Massachusetts delegation supported his nomination for the presidency through many ballotings—Benjamin F. Butler casting fifty-seven consecutive votes for him.[40] So if Davis did not succeed in sectional diplomacy, he did not fail in personal diplomacy.

Davis in Representatives' Hall, Jackson, Mississippi, an Apologia, November 11, 1858

Davis arrived in Jackson on November 8, Monday. If a diplomat, like a prophet, is threatened with a shortage of honor in his own land, he must have welcomed the action with which the Mississippi House met his return.

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[38] New York *Tribune,* Nov. 1, 4; Boston *Liberator,* Nov. 26, 1858; Pearson, I, 68; Edith Ellen Ware, *Political Opinion in Massachusetts* (New York, 1916), App. I.

[39] Nov. 4, 1858.

[40] Benjamin F. Butler, *Butler's Book* (Boston, 1892), pp. 138–142.

Within hours after the senator was known to be in the state capital, the House invited him to address its membership and the people on "public affairs."[41] In need of but little time for audience analysis and the selection of arguments best suited to serve his purposes, Davis accepted the invitation immediately, setting the date three days away, on Thursday. As he began work on his apologia he knew that the Faneuil Hall address stood less in need of defense than his more or less incidental remarks at sea, July 4, and at Portland, September 11. Clearly, he was to face three relatively distinct segments of opinion. The more rabid fire-eaters, feigning injury as the result of his speech at sea, wished to know of whom he spoke when he mentioned the trifling disunion politicians in the South. Moreover, the fire-eaters were protesting that his tacit assent in Portland to Douglas' Freeport doctrine was an apparent offer to bargain away the right of Southerners to carry slaves into any territory. A latent hostility of a different origin waited for him in the minds of the followers of Isaac Patridge's Vicksburg *Whig*, a strong Union paper with Douglas leanings. To Patridge, Davis had always been too much of a fire-eater. Even his Union speeches in the North, including that in Faneuil Hall, had received but mild and grudging praise in the columns of the *Whig*. Rather, Patridge suggested, Davis should come home and calm some of his wilder states' rights brethren. The *Whig* was, therefore, wondering if he would be "as warm a Union man in Mississippi as he is in Maine."[42] Friendly opinion, as represented by Barksdale of the *Mississippian*, waited upon him to vindicate his course and crush his detractors of both sides. And all people, friends and critics alike, sat ready to hear his answer to Seward's Rochester speech. The irrepressible conflict had been announced after Davis' last appearance in the North. Would Seward's "infamous declarations" and the Republican victories in the recent elections put more roar into the voice of the tame lion of Faneuil Hall? The people waited, and

> on the evening of the 11th, long before the hour appointed for the delivery of the address, the Representatives' Hall was crowded to overflowing by an audience composed of the beauty and intelligence of Mississippi assembled to pay respect to the distinguished Senator and to listen to his views upon the important political topics of the day. The lobby, the aisles and every part of the Hall were densely thronged. When the Senator entered, there was a simultaneous burst of applause which continued for some time, to be renewed when he ascended the rostrum.[43]

As he began, Davis spoke in the language of one who had narrowly missed the grave. "Wasted by protracted, violent disease,"[44] he had sought the restorative climate of New England at the close of Congress. Health returned and the people of New England, contrary to his expectations, had invited him to speak, treating him "with public and private manifestations of kindness." That his speeches in the North had aroused the "petty hostility of the more extreme of the Black Republicans," was a matter of no surprise. But when he found their assaults echoed in southern papers, he said, "it did astonish, I will confess, it did pain me, not for any injury apprehended to myself, but for its evil effect upon the cause with which I was identified." Among these evil effects, he protested, was the misunderstanding Southerners had of his speech in Portland, taken by some, in view of a single passage calculatingly extracted therefrom, as an approval of squatter sovereignty. The Portland speech, Davis said, was no endorsement of Douglas' Freeport doctrine, even though the Illinoisan had subsequently quoted from it at Alton to support the position announced in the Freeport debate. First, Douglas had used the passage out of context. The paragraph from which it was extracted had opened with the distinct assertion of the rights of equals in the Union to enter the territories, the "common property of States," with any form of property recognized by the Constitution, that is, slaves. Second, he had but admitted the possible power of unfriendly legislation, whereas Douglas had urged its use. Third, "in such a community as I have supposed, a slave inclined to abscond would become utterly useless, and that was the extent of the admission." And last, he had said only this much in an effort to give political aid to Maine Democrats. For in the last election, "one of the Senators of Maine had convinced many of the voters that if Mr. Buchanan should be elected, slavery would be forced upon Maine, and the other Senator was arguing that the Dred Scott decision of the Supreme Court had given authority to introduce and hold slaves in that State."[45]

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[41] *Jour. of the Mississippi House of Representatives* (Jackson, 1858), pp. 65, 69.

[42] Nov. 17, 1858.

[43] Jackson *Mississippian*, Nov. 17, 1858.

[44] For the text of the speech the Jackson *Mississippian* for Nov. 17, 1858, has been used. It was also published in the Washington *National Intelligencer* (Nov. 27) and the New York *Journal of Commerce* (Nov. 26). More accessible is the text in Rowland, *Davis Papers*, III, 339–360, where it is misdated as Nov. 16.

All in all, Davis had squirmed adroitly, if not well enough to remove the discomfort of a too-wide straddling of the Mason-Dixon line. There was, to the pleasure of his critics, a hint of comic desperation as he shadowboxed with his Portland indiscretion. Yet such a clash as existed between his Jackson and Portland statements suggests more the futility of an 1858 try at diplomatic reconciliation of Maine and Mississippi opinion than any damning want of integrity in Davis. Like any other political leader in the tense years before the Civil War, Davis had, in talking to both sections of the nation, simply talked too much. It did not take long for either section to detect the ambiguity in his pet shibboleth, "community independence." He may have used the phrase in full sincerity, but "community independence" was still a rhetorical exercise in confusion and contradiction. In Boston and Portland it was used to guarantee the eternal absence of slavery in New England; in Jackson it meant the right of Mississippians to transport slaves into the Kansas Territory.[46]

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[45] In the several state campaigns of 1858 the Republicans had frequently asserted that the Dred Scott decision meant slavery throughout the nation. For example, Lincoln at Springfield, June 16: "We shall lie down pleasantly dreaming that the people of Missouri are on the verge of making their State free; and we shall awake to the reality instead, that the Supreme Court has made Illinois a slave State." Seward at Rochester, Oct. 25, warned that the fields of Massachusetts and New York might again "be surrendered by their farmers to slave culture and to the production of slaves, and Boston and New York become once more markets for trade in the bodies and souls of men."

Turning next to the possible injury sustained by any Southerners because of the July Fourth reference to "trifling disunion politicians," Davis contended the term could not be stretched to mean the states' rights Democracy of Mississippi.[47] For, as he said, he was a member of that group and obviously would not make strictures upon those to whom "I am indebted for whatever of consideration or position I possess." Rather, he had meant it to be descriptive of northern abolitionists, those "noisy agitators who were constantly disturbing the public peace." Then, with forthrightness, Davis added that he was willing to have the label apply to the "few, the very few of Southern men who, fancying that they would have advantages out of the Union which they cannot possess within it," seek its dissolution even though the South were assured of complete equality and security. Indeed, there were some who, "taking counsel of their passions, decry the labors of all who seek to preserve the government as our fathers formed it." Could this refer to Yancey and Rhett, perhaps? He gave no names, but he had probably read and been stung by Rhett's criticism in the *Mercury* of his "sophomorical eulogies of the Union," delivered while he was "bandying compliments" in the heart of Yankeedom.[48]

After an analysis of the Lecompton struggle, and praise of Buchanan for his role within it, Davis turned upon Seward and his speech of October 25 in Rochester. In the intervening three weeks all Democrats, and not a few Republicans, had denounced Seward's "irrepressible conflict" as dangerous and incendiary. Here, for Davis, was an ideal occasion to display righteous anger and seek some degree of reidentification with the southern militants. Accordingly, he labeled Seward the dangerously powerful mastermind of the Republican party, and warned his audience that an abolition president was possible in 1860. If one were elected, the enemies of the South would have won the power necessary "to deprive you of your birthright and to reduce you to worse than the colonial dependence of your fathers." Against this threat Mississippi should take steps to provide for her safety outside the Union, and be prepared, if necessary, to tear her star from its position in the flag and place it "even on the perilous ridge of battle." All this he would do reluctantly, he said, for he had loved and fought in behalf of Union and flag. The separation of Mississippi from the Union should only "be the last remedy—the final alternative. In the language of the venerated Calhoun I consider the disruption of the Union as a great though not the greatest calamity." But, said Davis, the calamity might be averted if Mississippi built an armory and began upon a program of military preparation. Then, in defense of the recommendation, he added: "Such preparation will not precipitate us upon the trial of secession . . . for Mississippi's patriotism will hold her to the Union so long as it is constitutional, but it will give to our conduct the character of earnestness. . . . It will strengthen the hands of our friends at the North."

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[46] Nevins (I, 416–418) sees Davis as having made an "embarrassingly sudden *volte-face*" from Portland to Jackson on the question of Congressional protection of slavery in the territories. As Nevins reads the Jackson speech, Davis would have Congress enact a federal slave code for the territories. It is questionable whether the inference is justifiable. So much of congressional protection as Davis may have had in mind is hardly less implicit in his northern speeches. In Portland, Augusta, and Boston, he had asserted the slaveholder's right to enter the territories, but he had not followed through with a demand that Congress underwrite the slaveholder's position. Analysis of his words at Jackson shows him still avoiding the demand. Yet in support of Nevins' interpretation it is true that Davis, in Jackson, was less vehement in denying an interest in a federally enacted slave code.

[47] Davis added, moreover, that he should not be held to account for the language which a fellow passenger aboard the "Joseph Whitney" had used in a memory report to the Boston *Post*, July 7, 1858.

[48] Davis was following a line of explanation he had already made public in the South. See his letter to Major James Roach, Vicksburg, Aug. 3, 1858, printed in the Jackson *Mississippian* (Aug. 18), the Boston *Post* (Aug. 27), and the Portland (Me.) *Advertiser* (Sept. 1).

Beyond this, Davis offered a rhetorical flourish, saying the act promised "manly hearts the happy assurance that manly arms will not fail to protect the gentle beauty which blesses our land and graces the present occasion." More important, however, than the flourish was the connection Davis made between his bristling response to Seward and strengthening "the hands of our friends at the North." Apparently he made no wide departure from the purposes for which he spoke in New England. The Democratic party, if maintained in power, continued to satisfy his two goals—the preservation of the Union and the assertion of states' rights precepts giving security to slavery. Toward these ends he could speak as he had in Jackson, urging his fellow Mississippians to believe that most northern Democrats were safe in the faith, but warning them that Republicans were so dangerous as to justify the South in taking protective or separatist steps. This position, neither fire-eater nor wholly unionist, placed him clearly within the majority group of Southerners in 1858. Like most of his contemporaries, Davis preferred to remain in the national Democratic party and work for Union and slavery, rather than to stand on the outside, down South, and make threats.[49] Yet he was so thoroughly committed to the Mississippi way of life and the slavery mind that, when he thought he must, he could and did threaten. These threats were not altogether hollow, nor was he unwilling to pursue them through all their consequences.

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[49] In comparison with how he had stood in 1850–1851, this position may be seen as an indication of softening on the part of Davis. As an opponent of Clay's compromise measures of 1850, he had believed and uttered views strongly separatist in nature. However, President Pierce, in 1853, had included Davis in his cabinet, giving the Mississippian an opportunity to work with northern Democrats on an administrative rather than a legislative level. Here, in contact with Cushing of Massachusetts, Pierce of New Hampshire, Marcy of New York, and with southern moderates such as Cobb, Davis had moved a pace along the way from secession on slighter provocation toward secession only as a final and, to him, desperate measure.

The speaker was "listened to with breathless attention, and was disturbed only by the voluntary and tumultuous plaudits with which at intervals the multitude attested their approval of his patriotic utterances."[50]

Barksdale printed a full account of the speech in the *Mississippian*, thus making Davis' words available for national circulation. With circulation came a varied reaction. In the South, most papers of states' rights persuasion were satisfied and hailed the speech and speaker as the ultimate in southern principles and eloquence. "We don't believe God ever made a truer man to his section," confided the Montgomery *Confederation*, as it personally adopted the "distinguished and beloved son of the South" and defended him from criticism, saying, "if there is a sense of shame left in the bosom of his late traducers, we should suppose that it would be awakened by the perusal of the speech."[51] The Oxford (Mississippi) *Mercury* felt that the speech "effectually clears away all doubts about his fidelity to the South, and shows that he is still as true to her as the needle to the pole. [His critics] will now be forced to acknowledge that he is the champion of principles in no-wise inimical to the glory and honor of the South."[52] Several southern papers noted with satisfaction the furor which the speech created in Republican circles. "If his *exposé* of Seward causes the Northern people to turn with disgust from the arch-traitor," said the Petersburg (Virginia) *Press*, "it will have accomplished a public good, and such from the howlings of the Black Republican press, we are persuaded, in some measure it has succeeded in doing."[53] The Charleston (South Carolina) *Mercury*, in the words of its New York correspondent, felt that the speech was "well calculated to disturb the temper of the Northern sectionalists, the more so they hear, on all sides, the applause and enthusiastic approval with which the honest, conservative masses at the North have received the gallant Senator's speech. . . . [It will] arouse the sensible and prudent, North of Mason and Dixon's line, to repudiate the Seward doctrines, and renew their devotion to the Constitution and the Union, and the great principles of States Rights."[54]

In the North, the New York *Journal of Commerce*, preparing to publish the full Jackson text, announced that it "must convince the impartial reader that devotion to the Union of the States, and a perpetuity of our institutions as bequeathed to us by our ancestors, is not by any means confined to Northern men." Then, in support of Davis' states' rights views, the *Journal* asserted that any man of New York, if he were faced with the "surrender of the rights and privileges reserved to our own State," in order to continue the Union, would "unhesitatingly stand by the former." Asked the *Journal*, "Shall we condemn the men of the South for manifesting a like spirit?"[55] To which the New York *Tribune* replied: "Such are the optical delusions incited by Cotton."[56]

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[50] Jackson *Mississippian*, Nov. 17; see also Vicksburg *Whig*, Nov. 17, 1858: Davis "was frequently applauded by his friends."

[51] Montgomery (Ala.) *Confederation*, in Jackson *Mississippian*, Dec. 22, 1858. During the weeks following Nov. 11, editor Barksdale clipped and published in the *Mississippian* items which would reflect the success of the speech. See issues of Nov. 24, Dec. 1, 8, 15, 22, 1858, and Jan. 12, 19, 1859, for notices from: New Orleans *True Delta*, Louisville *Courier*, Nashville *Union*, Columbia (S.C.) *State Rights Banner*, Montgomery *Advertiser*, Albany (N.Y.) *Argus and Atlas*, Lowell (Mass.) *Patriot and Republican*, and Belfast (Me.) *Republican Journal*, as well as the papers directly quoted in this study.

[52] In Jackson *Mississippian*, Dec. 1, 1858.

[53] In Jackson *Mississippian*, Dec. 22, 1858.

[54] In Jackson *Mississippian*, Dec. 15, 1858.

In Washington, the *Union*, an organ of Buchanan's administration, not only endorsed Davis' speech, but saw in it the signs of admirable character traits which were, by implication, so deplorably lacking in Douglas. Said the *Union:* "It is a speech as remarkable for its patriotism and soundness of opinion as for its freedom from caution and sycophancy belonging to the eager presidential aspirations which in these times so afflict the politics of this country, warp the principles and detract from the character of otherwise promising politicians. It is the speech of a Statesman, a patriot, an inflexible, incorruptible democrat, and true man."[57] And in Philadelphia the *Pennsylvanian* observed that Davis had distinguished himself by his "veneration for the Union, and attachment to those great constitutional principles upon the maintenance of which its perpetuity depends."[58] Apparently, such disunionism as he had woven into the Jackson apologia was insufficient to force most northern Democratic papers to disown him. If, as was later charged, he was secretly working to disrupt the Democratic party and thereby precipitate secession, he was doing so not so much by frightening away northern Democratic leaders as by persuading them to avow political suicide. It is true that the practical result was political suicide, but there is no reason to believe that Davis had wished the demise of his northern Democratic colleagues.

Republican papers turned upon the speech with the devices of sarcasm. "As a rhetorical performance," commented the Boston *Atlas and Bee*, "it is nothing remarkable, unless it be as an unusually fervid and candescent specimen of the style known as highfalutin and flabbergast." The paper then charged Davis with duplicity. In his Faneuil Hall speech, nationality had "caused each particular hair on his patriotic cranium to stand erect with horror at the contemplation of dissolution." But, in his Jackson speech, there was "such a rattling of grape shot and ringing clash of bayonets, that the reader can hardly make himself believe that the war has not already begun." There was, however, no cause for alarm, for "all this bluster is only indulged in just now in order to protect the gallant Colonel from fire in the

[55] Nov. 26, 1858.
[56] Nov. 27, 1858.
[57] In Jackson *Mississippian*, Dec. 8, 1858.
[58] In Vicksburg *Whig*, Dec. 15, 1858.

rear, opened upon him when his face was momentarily turned northward."[59] With like irony, Greeley's *Tribune* derided the climax of the speech: "The Mars of Mississippi could not close without paying his devoirs to 'gentle beauty'. . . . From this we fear that the wholesome war with which he threatened us will never be declared . . . and that Mr. Jefferson Davis having, Caesar-like, been captivated by the Cleopatras of Mississippi, will sink into effeminate habits, and neither be shot nor hung, whereby justice, as usual, will be cheated."[60]

Meanwhile, back in Mississippi, editors unfriendly to Davis and his point of view likewise chose the weapons of irony and sarcasm. Patridge's Vicksburg *Whig* said that if Davis' Jackson speech had not sufficiently cowed the North, why "we'll—we'll—we'll send Jeff Davis back to Maine." Seeking also to discredit the distinction Davis made between his Portland speech and Douglas' Freeport doctrine, the *Whig* called it the difference between tweedledum and tweedledee, and allowed that it might be understood by some, especially "those who expect to go to Jeff Davis when they die."[61]

In fine, the speech had a predictable effect. Sympathetic southern editors, wishing to refute the charge that Davis weakened before northern fleshpots, could point to his forthright espousal of correct states' rights dogma. Further, ardent Southerners were well satisfied with the challenge Davis had flung back at Seward, and with the way in which his challenge highlighted what they termed the incendiary nature of Seward's Rochester speech. Northern Democratic papers likewise approved the Jackson meeting, albeit possibly in terms of praise somewhat less excessive. And Republican circles responded with sarcasm.

Such were the results of the speech as reflected in widespread editorials. Regrettably, these editorials, colorful as they are, provide little knowledge of tangible results. It is always difficult to assess the results of speeches which have no purpose other than shaping opinion. In Jackson, it should be remembered, Davis was not speaking to affect the outcome of an immediate election. He demanded no specific action responses, except the one contained in his suggestion that the Mississippi legislature should take steps to arm the state. This the legislature did in part, reorganizing the militia but taking no action regarding the creation of an armory.[62]

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[59] In Boston *Liberator*, Dec. 3, 1858.

[60] Nov. 23, 1858. This passage was undoubtedly written either by Horace Greeley or C. T. Congdon. If Greeley wrote it, his reference to the hanging of Davis invites an observation on how times change. In 1867, Greeley signed as surety the $100,000 bail bond by which Davis secured his freedom from Fortress Monroe.

[61] Dec. 15 and Nov. 24, 1858.

[62] *Laws of the State of Mississippi, Passed at a Called Session of the Mississippi Legislature, Held in the City of Jackson, November, 1858* (Jackson, 1859). If we may believe the result of an inventory of Mississippi's armed might, facetiously reported in the Vicksburg *Whig* (Dec. 15, 1858), it was discovered that the state had one cannon, four flintlock muskets, seven rusty bayonets, five major generals, ten brigadier generals, sixty colonels, and so on, 4,800 corporals, and no privates.

SUMMARY

Should Davis be judged by the standards of a fixed consistency, the charge of duplicity raised by his critics is valid. But the shadings between duplicity and diplomacy are frequently obscure, particularly inside a political party. In New England he had not omitted a militant, even threatening, assertion of the ultimate in states' rights; in Jackson he had defended the unionism appearing in his northern speeches, and had suggested principles and measures which he argued were for the good and permanence of the Union. If then, the variations which occur in the coloring and stressing of his ideas are viewed as allowable concessions to differences in audience, time, and place, Davis was essentially the same Democrat and man in Mississippi as he was in Massachusetts. This conclusion, it would seem, is supported by a review of the opinions expressed concerning his speeches in 1858. In the South he was criticized by those whose disunionist tendencies exceeded his in zeal and by those whose attachment to the Union surpassed his; he was supported by the greater portion of what we might term the southern moderates–those who preferred to maintain the Union intact if states' rights principles could be successfully exploited to protect slavery. In the North he was endorsed by such members of the Democratic party as had not been disaffected by the slavery issue, and was condemned bitterly by Republicans and abolitionists. Within the limits of whatever statesmanship could be achieved by one committed both to the Union and to slavery, Davis was effective. Yet he was not persuasive before the northern opponents of slavery, nor could he make the prospect of a Union tolerant of slavery expansion attractive for them; in the South he had no inclination to urge a Union intolerant of slavery expansion. Thus his diplomacy, however sincere or effective, was not directed toward an end which could have prevented sectional warfare. By belief, heritage, and ability, Davis was not a man to do this.

In the longer range of time, his effort at sectional diplomacy may have contributed somewhat to his selection as president of the Confederacy. Not the warmest of fire-eaters, as his North and South speeches of 1858 should show, he was more acceptable in 1861 to a hesitating Virginia and some of the Border States. But, in terms of hastening or delaying the coming of the Civil War, it can only be concluded that a Davis courting the North, like a Douglas courting the South, was caught up in a maelstrom of bitter emotions beyond his power to allay. Acceptably honest though his effort at diplomacy may have been, it alone was not equal to the resolution of a conflict soon to bring war.

Controversy Among College Students, 1858-1861

CHARLES W. LOMAS

4

On November 24, 1860, an excited student leaped to his feet in the Athenaean Literary Society at the University of Missouri to propose a subject for debate: "The southern youth who would kill Abraham Lincoln would be by future generations regarded the Brutus of America." The society apparently did not debate the proposition; yet its venomous wording suggests the violent conflict of ideas which confronted college men of 1860 in their literary societies. Some societies, to be sure, were little concerned with the contemporary world, but many others provided a vigorous counterbalance to the "farrago of monastic learning and classic trash" which characterized much college training at mid-century.[1]

Later-life recollections by the students of 1860 frequently attested to the educational value of the societies, and glorified the fervor and brilliance of their debates. Often these chroniclers suggested that the debaters of prewar days directed their skills almost exclusively to the solution of slavery and secession questions. But the correlation of fact between the reminiscences of 1890 and the record of 1860 is weak. All societies discussed these issues, and in some, political controversies were paramount. Yet sometimes the very organization in which the middle-aged alumnus recalled such heated debate was the one in which self-righteousness, timidity, or scholastic inertia restricted the freedom of political discussion. For a better insight into the period the historical observer should turn to the extant, but brief, minutes of the literary societies. Here in the precise Spencerian hand of conscientious secretaries is the story of what questions were debated, how often, and with what results.

While the makers of minutes usually failed to record the language of the speakers, or even to summarize their arguments, important implications may nevertheless be gleaned from literary-society remains. Why, for example, did North Carolina's Dialectic Society ignore slavery and secession questions in 1860–1861 when, in the same year, Indiana University Athenians debated these issues in fifteen of their twenty-five meetings? Why did the members of a Shurtleff College society invite Abraham Lincoln to address them in 1859, and then cancel the invitation? Is it significant that an Illinois College society enthusiastically extended debating time an hour on John Brown (November, 1859), and on another occasion attempted to debate the protective tariff, during which discussion "some of the older members had the indiscretion to carry on a side debate . . . while laying on the floor back of the desk, to the great annoyance of the society?"[2] How did it happen in the fall of 1860 that both Jefferson Davis and Abraham Lincoln were elected to honorary membership in the Indiana Athenians? When clues such as these are joined with other evidence treating of the intellectual and political atmosphere of the communities where the colleges were located, then both the pattern and the meaning of controversy among college students from 1858 to 1861 begin to emerge.[3]

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[1] *Harper's Weekly,* in Chicago *Press and Tribune,* July 7, 1860.

I

In general, there is a bond between the nature and extent of college debating activities and factors of geography, political climate, and academic tradition. The correlation is a limited one, for some student societies so behaved themselves as to belie expectations. Yet the tendency toward consistency is strong, particularly among students attending colleges politically or intellectually under Republican-abolition suasion. In such typical schools as Knox, Antioch, and the University of Michigan, student debaters dealt often and vigorously with slavery and secession and, as the crisis approached, their speeches on these issues became more frequent and more intense.

On March 11, 1859, the Literary Adelphi Society of the University of Michigan, meeting in its assumed capacity as the "Senate of the United States," adjourned without doing any business "on account of a lecture delivered this evening by Fred Douglass."[4] The society minutes do not indicate that any members considered this action incongruous, or that the "representatives" of the cotton states raised any objection to hearing the great Negro abolition orator. Yet this pseudo Senate, in spite of its strong antislavery bias, discussed all the national issues of the time. "Southern senators" introduced bills to abolish the tariff, to commend the Dred Scott decision, to divide Texas, to build a Pacific railroad by a southern route, to defend states' rights and the doctrine of nullification, to reopen the slave trade, and to enforce the Fugitive Slave Law. Most of these bills failed even to come to a vote of the "Senate," and the maximum support marshaled for any of them was twelve votes out of forty in favor of the Dred Scott decision. The majority antislavery faction introduced fewer bills, but strangely enough, most of these did not come to a vote either.

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[2] Minutes of the Sigma Pi Society, Illinois Col., Mar. 1, 1861.

[3] This study includes data from twenty-eight societies in eighteen colleges where responsible officials reported that society records for 1858–1861 were in good order, as well as information derived from college histories; see also David Potter, *Debating in the Colonial Chartered Colleges* (New York, 1944), and Frank B. Davis, "Literary Societies of Selected State Universities of the Lower South," unpub. diss. (Louisiana State Univ., 1949).

[4] Minutes of the Literary Adelphi Society, Univ. of Michigan, Mar. 11, 1859.

From 1858 to 1861 the Literary Adelphi Society devoted thirty-two of seventy-nine debates or "Senate" bills to slavery and disunion issues. In this respect it resembled Republican-abolitionist societies at Knox and Antioch colleges. In 1858 societies in the three schools[5] discussed crisis issues in one meeting out of five; two years later their emphasis on these themes had more than doubled. Student leaders apparently adopted the abolitionist maxim that agitation brings reform, and they kept the slavery question constantly before their societies.

Although Michigan authorities made half-hearted efforts to keep the university administration and faculty free from political factionalism, this control apparently was not extended to the literary societies. Thus in 1858 President Henry Tappan addressed the University Christian Library Association, attacking internal and external "political interference, local prejudice, and sectarian expectations." The Detroit *Free Press,* a Douglas paper, applauded Tappan's remarks, but noted ironically that George William Curtis on the same day "delivered an address before the Literary Society, in which, following out the suggestions of Dr. Tappan . . . that political matters should not be introduced into the University, he gave an elegant compilation of 'bleeding Kansas,' 'Dred Scott,' and 'Lecompton,' with 'Old Buck' in the background, gazing benignantly on the *dark* scene before him."[6]

At Knox College the administration was openly and violently abolitionist, as was the city of Galesburg. Contrary views held in the surrounding countryside merely made Knox sudents more eager to discuss the issues leading to the war.[7] In the Knox College societies the choice of subjects and their wording reveal the strong antislavery bias of the students. From September, 1859, until the election of Lincoln, Knox Adelphi propositions included: the right of territories to exclude slavery; the desirability of immediate emancipation;[8] the right to disobey laws "which interfere with the free use of conscience"; whether the election of a Democratic president in 1860 "would insure the permanency of the Union more than the election of a Republican" (March 21, 1860);[9] whether the declaration "that all men are created free and equal is true." They also established a "superior court," which tried and acquitted John Brown of treason.[10]

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[5] Michigan Literary Adelphi, Knox Gnothautii, Knox Adelphi, Antioch Star. Antioch records are less complete than those at Knox and Michigan.

[6] June 25, 1858.

[7] *History of Knox County, Illinois* (Chicago, 1878), *passim.*

[8] At almost the same time as the Knox emancipation debate, South Carolina students were deciding that a republican government could not be permanent without slavery (Minutes of the Clariosophic Society, South Carolina Col., Feb. 20, 1860).

[9] The South Carolinians twice decided in favor of immediate secession if a "Black

During this period the Knox Gnothautii Society debated some of the same topics, but added discussions on: "Helper's book"; the Potter-Pryor bowie knife duel; colonization of free blacks in Africa;[11] the right of search at sea for slave traders; "Should the Union be dissolved?" (March 21, 1860); "We indorse the nominee of the Chicago convention for President of the USA" (May 23, 1860); "Congress has the power to abolish slavery in the territories and it is expedient to exercise it" (September 19, 1860).[12]

After Lincoln's election, the wording of propositions in the two societies suggested significant differences in their attitudes toward coercion of seceding states. Adelphians appeared to be under the influence of the abolitionists, who welcomed the dissolution of the "covenant with Death and agreement with Hell." They argued the propositions: "The dissolution of the Union would be an advantage to the North"; "It would be both right and politic for the Northern states to recognize the Southern Confederacy if the public property which belongs to the old Confederacy should be paid for"; "Did the Southern Rebellion have its origin in the imperfection of Republican institutions?"[13] Propositions of the Gnothautii Society, however, seemed to uphold Lincoln's position that the preservation of the Union was the first object of his administration. Thus they debated: "Have the states a right to secede from the Union?" "The South is not justifiable in seceding from the Union under existing circumstances"; "Should the general government employ force in the preservation of the Union in its integrity?" "Lincoln should accede to the proposition that the war should not be ended till the government Flag waves over all U.S. Property."[14]

In the college strongholds of abolitionism and Republicanism, the attitudes of students reflected the opinions of their elders. Adopting the principle of the abolitionists that agitation brings reform, they debated the issue of slavery often, and consciously or unconsciously loaded their propositions in the direction of the majority bias. On the issue of preserving the Union, the cleavage between radical abolitionists and Union Republicans was reproduced in student groups. Not until armed conflict had begun was there substantial unity of belief among antislavery students on the secession question.

Republican" should be elected (Minutes of the Clariosophic Society, Oct. 25, 1856; Oct. 30, 1858).

[10] Adelphi Literary Proceedings, Knox Col., 1859–1860, *passim.*

[11] The South Carolinians at the same period favored "a law requiring *free negroes* to leave the state or become enslaved" (Minutes of the Clariosophic Society, Jan. 14, 1860).

[12] Gnothautii Literary Proceedings, Knox Col., 1859–1860, *passim.*

[13] Adelphi Literary Proceedings, Nov. 21, 1860, Feb. 20, May 22, 1861.

[14] Gnothautii Literary Proceedings, Nov. 28, 1860, Jan. 9, 23, June 15, 1861. Of course both sides of all questions were argued in the societies. It is the loading of propositions in one direction or the other that is significant.

II

As in the Republican-abolitionist schools, sentiment on the slavery question in secessionist colleges was strongly homogeneous. But whereas in the former group young abolitionists agitated for reform by conducting frequent, though one-sided, arguments on the slavery question, the dominant conservatism in southern colleges restricted freedom of debate. Discussions of the ethics of slavery were virtually banned, and secession was debated with a frequency in inverse proportion to the distance from Charleston, where radical disunionists used the society forums to campaign for the dissolution of the federal government. Yet the emphasis given to slavery and disunion questions was uniformly slight.[15] Although southern students chose these themes four times as often in 1860–1861 as in 1858–1859, they still discussed them only half as frequently as did the Republican-abolitionist debaters. On the eve of the war, only one debate in five in secessionist colleges dealt with crisis issues.

In an atmosphere of tacit suppression of the explosive problems of the day, the academic quiet of the University of North Carolina campus was shattered in the fall of 1856, when Professor Benjamin Hedrick declared himself for John C. Frémont for president of the United States. Hedrick insisted that he was not an antislavery man, rationalizing that barring of slaves from the territories would increase the wealth of North Carolina by keeping her slaves and their income at home. But Hedrick's disavowal did not save him from the wrath of the university community, and the professor was dismissed with payment of a year's salary. President David Swain, in commenting on the incident, pointed out that there was no institution in the country in which partisan politics and sectarian religion were so carefully excluded, and noted that students for twenty years had been prevented from discussing questions of party politics on the public stage.[16] Although there is no indication that President Swain's prohibition was intended to cover the closed meetings of literary societies, the spirit indicated by the dismissal of Professor Hedrick was not conducive to free discussion, and debates on slavery and disunion were cautious and infrequent.

In the fifties North Carolina's Philanthropic Society was composed primarily of students from the eastern slaveholding area of the state. In this society, slavery and disunion topics were discussed more frequently than in the sister Dialectic Society. Philanthropic members debated the right of secession, the disposition of free Negroes, and slavery in the territories; however, they avoided all questions dealing with the justice of slavery, a topic which was regarded as a closed issue.[17]

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[15] Secession societies included in this study were North Carolina Dialectic, North Carolina Philanthropic, South Carolina Clariosophic, South Carolina Euphradian, Virginia Washington.

[16] Kemp Battle, *History of the University of North Carolina* (Raleigh, 1907), I, 655–656.

The members of the Dialectic Society came in larger numbers from the Piedmont and the mountainous area, where slavery was less important to the economy. Here there were many small independent farms, and trade and manufacturing were already developing. Among the members of this society there was apparently some Union sentiment, but they were afraid to debate the issue. As early as 1852, the society voted against the proposition: "Should political questions be discussed in debating societies?"[18] Frequently the society turned down slavery and disunion topics proposed by the committee in charge and substituted less explosive subjects.[19] The last Dialectic debates dealing with slavery and disunion questions occurred in 1859, when the society approved the reopening of the African slave trade and decided that disunion would not be profitable to the South and was not probable.[20] In 1860–1861 the Society avoided all subjects touching on these issues.

Moderate opinions also prevailed at the University of Virginia, where the Washington Society at one period prohibited debates on "political issues of the United States."[21] Two articles written by students in the university magazine probably reflect the views of debaters as they were expressed in the societies. One of these essays, bearing a title often used as a debate subject, "Is slavery a moral evil?" was a strong defense of slavery on Biblical grounds.[22] The second article was an equally strong attack upon the proponents of disunion, North and South, arguing that disunion would be impossible without the terrible consequences of civil war.[23]

In marked contrast, students of South Carolina College had no apparent doubts about either slavery or secession. As early as 1850–1851, the two South Carolina societies voted five times for secession, a verdict repeated often in the ensuing decade.[24] Similarly, they recommended the reopening of the African slave trade, the employment of slaves in manufacturing, and the expulsion of free Negroes. They also supported dueling and lynching under "certain circumstances." They were certain that a republican government could not be maintained without slavery. After secession they urged the calling in of foreign aid to sustain their independence, and the inclusion of the Border States in the Confederacy.[25]

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[17] In earlier years antislavery sentiment was present even in colleges of the Deep South, but abolition spokesmen had been silenced in the fifties (Davis, p. 176).

[18] Minutes of the Dialectic Society, Univ. of North Carolina, Aug. 20, 1852.

[19] On Mar. 24, 25, 1854, the society rejected queries dealing with the Nebraska bill and the Missouri Compromise in favor of the proposition: "Should privateering be incident to war?" Propositions were also rejected or modified on Sept. 15, 1855; Oct. 10, Nov. 7, 1856; Apr. 6, Oct. 13, 1860.

[20] Dialectic Minutes, Feb. 4, Oct. 7, 21, 1859.

[21] The minutes of the society for Jan. 7, 1860, record, without evidence of action taken, a motion to repeal such a rule.

[22] *Virginia Literary Mag.*, V (Apr., 1861), 363–370.

[23] "A Plea for the Union," *University Literary Mag.*, I (Oct., 1857), 289–296.

[24] Members of the Clariosophic Society were so certain of secession as to word a proposition: "Ought the South to convene a Congress before it secedes from the Union?" (Minutes of the Clariosophic Society, Jan. 4, 1851.)

While all secessionist societies tended to limit debate on slavery, their motives were not identical. Students at the Universities of North Carolina and Virginia were conciliatory in their views. They were proslavery in sentiment, but they were not fire-eaters. They hoped to preserve the Union —with slavery.[26] As a result, they avoided agitation on dangerous issues. Following the example of their elders, they sought to form a bridge between the extremists of the South and those of the North. In South Carolina there was no such restraint. The infrequency of debates about the issue of slavery in that state's societies must be attributed to a feeling that the issue was not debatable. They had no hesitancy in discussing methods of maintaining and expanding the slave system, but they never questioned the basic assumptions underlying it.[27] Secession, on the other hand, was argued more often, apparently in the hope of stimulating and crystallizing disunion sentiment.

III

In sharp contrast to the aggressive verbalism of Republican-abolitionist societies of the North and the defensive silence of proslavery groups of the South, many societies were under strong pressures from partisans of both factions and their loyalties were divided. The struggle for the minds of American youth was most violent in those areas of Missouri, Indiana, Illinois, and Ohio where the westward flow of immigration came with almost equal force along the great rivers from both free and slave states. Only in a literary society of this area could debate propositions be suggested on subjects as irreconcilable as a proposal to assassinate Abraham Lincoln and a demand to enforce the laws of the United States in the states which seceded.[28] As the crisis approached, the divided loyalties of society members in these areas became more and more evident, and with increasing frequency the minutes of the meetings recorded "rather more bitter party feeling . . . than was altogether compatible with the perfect harmony of the society."[29] By 1860, one debate in three dealt with slavery and secession. Moreover, the Athenian Society at Indiana University was the scene in 1860–1861 of the most frequent and acrimonious debates on crisis issues of any society included in this study.

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[25] Clariosophic Minutes, 1850–1861, *passim.* Minutes of the Euphradian Society, 1850–1861, *passim.*

[26] This was essentially the position taken by Jefferson Davis in his speeches in Massachusetts and Mississippi in 1858.

[27] The same type of dogmatism in the North caused a Knox society to phrase a debate on the Fugitive Slave Law: "Is a man justifiable in the sight of God for obeying a law he believes to be wrong?" (Gnothautii Literary Proceedings, Knox Col., Feb. 29, 1860.)

[28] Minutes of the Athenaean Society, Univ. of Missouri, Nov. 24, 1860; Apr. 19, 1861. There is some doubt that either of these debates was actually held, but both subjects were seriously proposed.

[29] Report of a debate on the Crittenden Compromise, discussed for six hours in two meetings (Minutes of the Sigma Pi Society, Illinois Col., Feb. 1, 16, 1861).

These societies with divided loyalties[30] were direct reflections of the communities in which they were located. The Ohio River was the main highway for the settlement of the West. As new lands were opened, men of both sections moved into the farms and villages on both sides of the river, bringing with them the prevailing views of their former communities on the subject of slavery. Antislavery Northerners settled in western Virginia, Kentucky, and Missouri, while proslavery Southerners colonized the rich river valleys of free southern Indiana, Ohio, and Illinois. Monroe County, where Indiana University is located, was typical of these communities of divided loyalties. Although some southern families had settled there to escape slavery,[31] the great majority of them retained southern opinions and maintained them stoutly. Sometimes Southerners were actually in the majority, and several communities were dubbed "Secessia"[32] by their neighbors in the spring of 1861. Monroe County was solidly Democratic in every national election until 1860, when Lincoln carried the county by only twenty-three votes over his three opponents.[33]

Thus throughout southern Indiana, as in other river-oriented communities, hot-headed and sharp-tongued frontiersmen represented every shade of opinion, from the extreme southern to the extreme abolitionist position. The Athenian Society of Indiana University contained partisans of every one of these viewpoints. In this respect it was typical of other societies with divided loyalties, but the conflict was more intense among the Athenians than in any other group. Fortunately, Athenian secretaries had sufficient imagination and alertness to record many of the most vigorous controversies in considerable detail, including the names of the speakers and detailed results of numerous roll-call votes on bitterly contested issues.

In a community where passions ran high, it is rather surprising that university officials took no steps to curb discussion in the society.[34] On the contrary, Athenians of all shades of opinion spoke their minds, always with spirit, frequently with bitterness. So intense was the feeling in the society, and so evenly were the proponents of northern and southern beliefs divided, that the votes on slavery and disunion issues now favored the northern, and now the southern, view. Thus Athenian students are on record, often by a margin of only one or two votes, as believing that abolitionism had worsened the condition of the slave (October 24, 1856); favoring the Dred Scott decision (May 23, 1857); favoring the abolition of slavery (October 1, 1858); holding that intemperance was a greater moral evil than slavery (January 7, 1859); believing that disunion was improbable (March 22, 1859); and contending that it would be preferable to admit a state which permitted slavery rather than one which permitted Negro equality (May 18, 1860), that slavery was not necessarily sinful (October 26, 1860), that a state had the right to secede (November 30, 1860), that Congress had the right to coerce a seceding state (January 4, 1861), and that the Crittenden resolutions should be adopted (January 25, 1861).[35]

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[30] Marietta Psi Gamma, Marietta Alpha Kappa, Ohio Athenian, Ohio Philomathean, Miami Union, Miami Erodelphian, Indiana Athenian, Illinois Phi Alpha, Illinois Sigma Pi, Missouri Athenaean.

[31] Henry L. Smith, "The Underground Railroad in Monroe County," *Indiana Mag. of History*, XIII (Sept., 1917), 288 ff.

[32] Charles Blanchard, ed., *Counties of Morgan, Monroe, and Brown, Indiana* (Chicago, 1884).

[33] *History of Lawrence and Monroe Counties, Indiana* (Indianapolis, 1914), pp. 246–247.

[34] At Princeton, where one-third of the students were southern, the Cliosophic Society voluntarily curbed discussion of sectional issues (Potter, p. 84). At the same time, the administration took a strong stand against mob action, and against inflammatory speeches favoring the South. (Thomas J. Wertenbaker, *Princeton, 1746–1896* [Princeton, N.J., 1946], pp. 268–269.)

In the fall of 1859, arguments in the society on crisis issues mounted in number, length, and pitch of excitement. Whereas the usual length of a debate was an hour and a half, slavery and disunion topics provoked discussions lasting as long as three hours. By 1860, three debates out of five were devoted to war issues.

Even when no debates were held, the impetuosity of opposing opinions revealed itself in unscheduled controversy. On October 19, 1860, the Athenians canceled their scheduled debate on the Missouri Compromise when a conflicting concert in Bloomington took many of the members away. In its place occurred the first of several tempestuous wrangles over the election of honorary members. D. C. Faris, son of one of the leading abolitionists of Monroe County, moved for the election of Abraham Lincoln. After some preliminary skirmishing, Belding, a strong proslavery advocate,[36] moved to attach the names of Joshua Giddings and Hinton Helper, an obvious attempt to smear Lincoln with the abolitionist brush.[37] After the failure of this motion, Kirkwood, another proslavery man, moved to attach the names of John Bell, Justice Taney, and, shortly after, the name of John C. Breckinridge. After prolonged parliamentary maneuvering, including a proposal to elect William L. Yancey to honorary membership, the society finally compromised by naming the four presidential candidates and excluding all others.[38]

In February the society sustained this action, refusing to expunge the names of Breckinridge and Lincoln from the roll. On the same day, the topic for debate was phrased in the remarkable wording: "Should the Republican party be tolerated?" The controversy was so bitter that the meeting ended in complete disorder and the debate was not finished.[39] Yet a month later the society sustained the negative of the proposition: "Are the Republican and Breckinridge parties responsible for the disturbances in the United States?"[40]

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[35] Minutes of the Athenian Society, 1856–1861, *passim.*

[36] The bias of members on the slavery issue and on coercion of the South was revealed by roll-call votes on bitterly contested debates. Secretaries did not ordinarily give first names or initials.

[37] Abolitionists were exceedingly unpopular in Monroe County, even among some Republicans, who were careful to point out that their platform opposed the extension of slavery, but did not propose its abolition (Smith, pp. 288 ff.).

[38] Minutes of the Athenian Society, Oct. 19, 1860.

Perhaps the most amazing act of the Athenians, however, came only a month before the fall of Fort Sumter, when the Indiana students elected Jefferson Davis and Alexander Stephens to honorary membership. Moreover, there is no evidence in the minutes of the society that this election created any serious opposition, though two months earlier the society had decided by a vote of twenty-one to eighteen that Congress had the right to coerce a seceding state. Perhaps by this time the students had decided that the Confederacy was an accomplished fact. But a few days after the fall of Sumter, the society, in a meeting characterized by reversal of votes and incredible confusion, expunged the name of Jefferson Davis from the rolls.[41]

While the situation in Indiana's Athenian Society was extreme, the same forces which emerged in such explosive fashion in Bloomington operated in all the colleges where loyalties were divided. Except in Missouri, antislavery and pro-Union sentiments characterized the dominant faction;[42] however, strident minority voices gave vigorous support to proslavery views. While there were few who openly championed secession, there were many who opposed coercion. To these students compromise meant the guarantee of continued slavery in the South. They regarded the abolitionists as the real disunionists. With such acrimonious division of opinion, debate could involve no real meeting of minds. It could only accentuate the gulf which separated conflicting points of view. The societies, however, continued to indulge in these stormy controversies so long as no external curbs were placed upon them. If they could not solve the problems, the students were at least given a realistic picture of the dilemma which confronted their elders in the council halls of the nation.

IV

It might have been expected that all western and southern societies of the late fifties would fall into one of the three categories already discussed. However, nine societies in six colleges defied such classification.[43] Geographically, societies of Washington and Jefferson Colleges should have resembled those at Marietta or Ohio; Otterbein and Antioch should have been similar; Wabash and Northwestern should have resembled Knox; and Shurtleff should have paralleled Illinois. Yet this was not the case. Students in these schools apparently could not discuss slavery and secession issues so freely as those in neighboring institutions. At the height of the crisis in 1860–1861, these debaters argued Civil War issues less than half as often as those in Republican-abolitionist schools or in colleges of divided loyalties, and somewhat less often than debaters in secessionist colleges.[44] Thus, in the period preceding the fall of Fort Sumter, debaters in the Philo Society of Jefferson College ignored the political campaign of 1860, the months of secession, and the organization of the Confederacy. At the first meeting of the society after the outbreak of hostilities, the members debated two subjects: "Is the character of Queen Elizabeth worthy of admiration?" "Is there such a thing as virtuous ambition?"[45] Although four of their next twelve questions could be interpreted as dealing with war themes, they all skirted the specific issues with such philosophical wordings as "Is resistance to constituted authorities in a Republican form of government ever justifiable?"[46]

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[39] Athenian minutes, Feb. 8, 1861. Kenneth M. Stampp observes that in southern Indiana in 1860 it was almost impossible to determine what a Republican was. In answer to persistent queries from Democrats, "The replies that came from the county assemblies . . . merely added to the confusion. . . . On the real issues . . . their opinions were ludicrously diverse." Many of the river counties endorsed popular sovereignty as sound Republican doctrine. Is it any wonder that the Athenians were confused? (*Indiana Politics during the Civil War* [Indianapolis, 1949], p. 26.)

[40] Minutes of the Athenian Society, Mar. 1, 1861.

[41] Athenian minutes, Mar. 15, Jan. 11, Apr. 19. Stephens' name was not expunged until Oct. 12, 1861.

[42] In Missouri the dominant group was both proslavery and pro-Union.

Percent of Debate Topics Dealing with Civil War Issues

Group	1858–1859	1859–1860	1860–1861
All societies	10.3	20.1	26.1
Repub.-Abol.	18.7	36.3	41.3
Divided loyalties	10.1	23.5	34.3
Secessionist	5.0	15.0	21.0
Restricted debate	7.6	9.9	16.9

At nearby Washington College, the Union Society in 1860–1861 debated two subjects dealing with slavery, but ignored secession; twenty-seven of their thirty-two subjects dealt with philosophical, religious, or literary questions.[47] In 1859–1860 Union members debated a slavery or disunion question only once, and even this subject was philosophical as to wording.[48]

The Washington and Jefferson societies are extreme examples of the refusal to face reality which characterized many colleges in 1860. As has already been noted, this apparent disinterest in contemporary issues cannot be explained with geographical or political reasons. One possible explanation might be the dominance in some of these colleges of a harsh and rigid Calvinist theology, as compared with warmer humanistic influences in other schools. While virtually all colleges in 1860 were "organized, supported, and in most cases controlled by religious interests,"[49] there were substantial differences among these controlling groups. Vernon L. Parrington points out a wide divergence which developed early in the nineteenth century between the theological rigidity of Calvinism and more liberal humanistic concepts.[50] Where rigid theology prevailed, there was often little room for discussion of the ephemeral problems of the day.

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[43] Jefferson Franklin, Jefferson Philo, Washington Union, Otterbein Philomathean, Northwestern Hinman, Wabash Calliopean, Wabash Lyceum, Shurtleff Alpha Zeta, Shurtleff Sigma Phi.

[44] The pattern of debate in all colleges studied is shown in the following table:

[45] Minutes of the Philo Society, Jefferson Col., May 10, 1861.

[46] Philo minutes, May 24, 1861.

[47] Minutes of the Union Literary Society, Washington Col., 1860–1861.

[48] "Is an equality of social condition among mankind desirable?" (Union minutes, Aug. 26, 1859.)

It was just such influences which seem to have caused the members of societies like the Washington Union to debate philosophical, religious, and literary propositions in preference to the issues of their time. While contemporary problems were not totally absent from the records, the infrequency with which they appeared indicates that the students did not think them appropriate for academic discussion. Under the influence of a faculty whose primary interests were in another world, the students also learned to prefer philosopical speculation to political conflict.[51]

A second factor that may have operated in these colleges is fear of the consequences of agitation.[52] The great Protestant denominations were being torn apart by the slavery controversy, and many clergymen had no stomach for further violent dissension. In some areas, as at Upper Alton, Illinois, where Shurtleff College is located, the memories of riots against abolitionists were still fresh, and administrators had no wish to involve their colleges in such controversies, as Edward Beecher of Illinois College had done at the time of the murder of Elijah Lovejoy.[53] Censorship based on this type of timidity is implied in the minutes of the Alpha Zeta Society of Shurtleff College. On May 15, 1859, the society invited Abraham Lincoln to speak. Three days later the invitation was hastily withdrawn and extended instead to E. R. Bates, who, though he later supported Lincoln, was considered conservative on dangerous issues at this time.[54] A year later the same society voted to debate "The choice of candidate for the Presidency of the Chicago convention was the best that could have been made." Later the question was postponed, and eventually shelved, in favor of the innocuous subject, "Is a constitutional monarchy preferable to a republican form of government?"[55] Not until secession was an accomplished fact did Shurtleff debaters freely argue slavery and disunion issues.[56]

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[49] Donald G. Tewksbury, *The Founding of American Colleges and Universities* (New York, 1932), p. 5.

[50] *Main Currents in American Thought*, II (New York, 1930).

[51] Minutes of the Lafayette Col. faculty for 1861–1865 contain only seven oblique references to the war. "The whole phenomenon showed how little removed in some respects the college of those days was from the monastery." (David B. Skillman, *The Biography of a College* [Easton, Pa., 1932], pp. 240–241.)

[52] This seems the more probable explanation of a sharp decline in slavery and disunion debates at Jefferson College in the late fifties. Clerical influences were less strong than at Washington and theological controversies were barred from the societies. (Constitutions of Franklin and Philo Literary Societies, 1796–1865, Jefferson Col.)

[53] Beecher was president of Illinois College in 1837, and joined in Lovejoy's call for an antislavery society in Illinois. Both Beecher and the college were targets for fierce attacks from proslavery newspapers and politicians. (C. H. Rummelkamp, *Illinois College, A Centennial History* [New Haven, Conn., 1928].)

[54] Minutes of the Alpha Zeta Society, Shurtleff Col., May 15, 18, 1859.

Did the absence of political debate in these societies indicate a complete lack of interest on the part of the students? A comment by the Wabash Lyceum secretary noted unusual indifference to a debate on the Nebraska bill and attributed it to an uninteresting subject.[57] On the other hand the records of Jefferson's Philo Society, which consistently debated philosophical and literary questions, reported continual disorder, indifference, and neglect of duty by members. In the latter case it is possible that the unreality of society debates prevented genuine interest on the part of the students. Certainly Shurtleff College students, living in the shadow of the Lovejoys, and almost as close as Knox students to one of the Lincoln-Douglas debates, could not have been indifferent to the issues of the day. Perhaps the real political discussion in colleges where society debate was restricted was off-campus, away from the stultifying influence of the faculty and administration.

V

Free and untrammeled debate was by no means universal in college literary societies from 1858 to 1861. Yet thousands of young men in American colleges in the years before the Civil War participated in political discussion of the great issues of slavery and disunion. In some cases these debates were little more than the confirming and reinforcing of deep-seated prejudices. To the avowed abolitionist of the North and the fire-eating secessionist of the South, society debate was a method of strengthening the dominant opinion, winning the doubter, and silencing the objector. The wording of propositions in centers of monolithic opinion, like Knox and South Carolina, often begged the questions that were disturbing the nation, and served merely as a propaganda medium for the agitators. In areas of divided loyalties society debates were bitterly two-sided but seldom decisive. There is little indication that they served to change opinions any more than did their counterparts in Congress during the same period. Yet students in these societies were certainly better informed than those whose opinions were more homogeneous. The debates were genuine, and the earnestness with which they were conducted, if it did not decide the issues, at least gave rigorous training to the speakers. Conversely, where timid counsel prevailed, debate was artificial and unreal. At best, students in colleges where debate was restricted learned to conduct democratic business meetings and developed skill in public speaking. At worst, they learned to be timid and suspicious of contemporary conflict, and to take refuge in literary and philosophical pursuits rather than to face the realities of life.

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[55] Alpha Zeta minutes, May 25, Sept. 27, 1860.

[56] In 1860–1861 Alpha Zeta debated five slavery and disunion subjects, but the first of these occurred on Jan. 11, 1861.

[57] Lyceum minutes, Feb. 17, 1854.

The Oberlin-Wellington Rescue Case, 1859

WARREN GUTHRIE

5

As a part of the famous Compromise of 1850, the Congress of the United States passed the Fugitive Slave Act. This act, one more anvil upon which the abolitionists were able to forge their antislavery crusade, was the law under which the Oberlin-Wellington Rescue Case arose. The thirty-seven men involved in the case were indicted under the provisions of Section 7, prohibiting interference with the recapture of runaway slaves.

The passage of the Fugitive Slave Act by a Democratic Congress, with the support of the Whigs, led to the first appearance of the Republican party in Ohio in 1855.[1] This particular group of Republicans consisted largely of antislavery Whigs and Democrats, united in their opposition to the Kansas-Nebraska Act and to the Fugitive Slave Law.

Each effort to enforce the law in the North created indignation in the community where it was made, and there emerged a group of radical Republicans who argued that the law was unconstitutional, and that the individual states, not the Supreme Court of the United States, had the right to determine whether a federal law was constitutional and could be enforced within its jurisdiction.

It was under these circumstances that the Oberlin-Wellington Rescue Case arose.

STATEMENT OF FACTS

Late in August, 1858, a stranger rode into the village of Oberlin, Ohio. He was a lank, dour man with a southern cast to his speech, and when he put up at Chauncey Wack's Russia House with every seeming intention of making a prolonged visit, there was considerable tension among the citizenry. The stranger, Anderson Jennings, admitted coming from Kentucky, and Oberlin was one of the most famous stops on the "underground railroad."

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[1] Eugene H. Roseboom, *The Civil War Era, 1850–1873,* in Carl Wittke, ed., *The History of the State of Ohio,* vol. IV (Columbus, 1944), pp. 257–260.

Jennings was looking for runaway slaves, and although he apparently did not find the slave he was after, he wrote to John G. Bacon of Kentucky that he had discovered a "nigger" (John Price), near Oberlin answering to the description of his runaway slave, John, and that if Bacon would send him a power of attorney he would get the slave. This Bacon did, and Jennings also secured from a United States District Marshal a warrant for the arrest of the alleged runaway John.

Jennings, with the aid of Deputy Marshal James K. Lowe, a deputy sheriff named Davis, and another Kentuckian, Richard P. Mitchell, then laid his plans to effect the capture of John. Instead af taking him openly, Jennings and his cohorts, on September 13, 1858, seized John on a country road, after paying a small boy to lure the colored man from Oberlin to this spot on the pretense of having a job for him on a farm that day. The captors then took John to Wellington, a small town south of Oberlin, to await the arrival of a train which would take them south.

However, as Jennings and his companions carried the captured John Price toward the Wadsworth House in Wellington they were seen by Seth Bartholemew, an Oberlin townsman. Although not greatly interested himself, Bartholemew told others, including Ansel Lyman, an Oberlin College student. Soon there was a spontaneous demonstration on the Wellington road and some fifty to sixty persons streamed on to Wellington. William C. Cochran, a Cincinnati lawyer who wrote a history of the rescue, states: "They had no organization and no leader. Many went from mere curiosity. . . . There were perhaps 20 guns in the crowd, very few of which were loaded. The first thought of those who were in earnest was, they must prevent the kidnappers—for that is what all believed the Southerners to be—from taking the afternoon train South, and so they surrounded the Wadsworth House, the hotel to which the captors had taken John, and blocked the doors and every avenue of escape."[2] The crowd outside the hotel eventually grew to from 150 to 300 persons, many of whom were mere onlookers, having been attracted to a fire in Wellington that day.

Late in the afternoon, following a meeting of a citizens' committee with the captors in the room where John was held, the main crowd held the attention of the "kidnappers," while others managed to force open the door of the room and lead John down the back stairs to freedom. Not a shot was fired, not a blow struck. John was hurried to Oberlin, hidden for three days in the house of one of the professors, and then spirited into Canada. After that he fades out of history; however, the Western Reserve flared as though lighted by a giant torch.

Early in December, thirty-seven men (twenty-one from Oberlin, sixteen from Wellington) were indicted and arrested for violation of the Fugitive Slave Act by interfering with the return of a runaway slave to his master.

[2] William C. Cochran, *The Western Reserve and the Fugitive Slave Law* (Cleveland, 1920), p. 129.

This statement of facts includes as few of the controversial aspects of the trial as possible. The disputed questions of fact and law which are important to the case are handled in the analysis of the trial.

THE TRIAL

The Indictment

The indictment by the Federal Grand Jury of the thirty-seven "rescuers" charged that they, "with force and arms, unlawfully, knowingly, and willingly, did rescue the said negro slave called John" from those who had lawfully seized him.[3] After several delays the defendants were brought to trial on April 5, 1859, before the Federal District Court in Cleveland.

The Accused

Although thirty-seven men were indicted, only two were actually tried and convicted. They were Simeon Bushnell, Town Clerk, and Charles Langston, a free Negro, both of Oberlin. Bushnell was sentenced to sixty days and fined $600, Langston received twenty days and a fine of $100. Since the trial of Langston was largely a repeat performance of Bushnell's trial, this study considers only the proceedings in the prosecution of Bushnell.[4]

Attorneys in the Case

All of the counsel were prominent citizens, and those who argued for the defense gave their services free of charge. They included Rufus P. Spalding, former Justice of the Supreme Court of Ohio, and later congressman from the Cleveland district for a number of terms; Franklin T. Backus, a former Cuyahoga County Prosecutor; Albert G. Riddle, later a congressman and diplomat; and Seneca O. Griswold, soon to appear at Charleston, Va., to defend John Brown. Only two of them, however, Riddle and Spalding, were permitted to make pleas following direct and cross-examination. Counsel for the government consisted of George W. Belden, United States District Attorney, and George Bliss.

Issues in the Trial

To gain an understanding of the analysis of the trial and trial techniques which follows, only a brief summary of the questions argued is necessary.

One of the major questions of law was whether the Fugitive Slave Act was constitutional, a question on which Spalding argued at great length for the defense. The court ruled, however, that the law was valid under the Constitution of the United States. The defense raised several other technical questions of law, and received adverse rulings of the court on all.

[3] Jacob R. Shipherd, *History of the Oberlin-Wellington Rescue* (Boston, 1859), p. 15.

[4] *United States v. Bushnell*, 74 U.S. District Court Criminal (1859). Except as indicated, all later references in this section are to the transcripts of this case.

The major questions argued by Riddle were: (1) Was the rescued John the slave who escaped from his master? (2) If so, was he properly arrested? (3) If so, did the defendant Bushnell know or have reason to know that John was properly arrested? While these three questions of law and fact do not constitute all those raised in the trial, they are the most important issues of fact, and the issues upon which the defense could make its strongest argument.

Argument for the Defense—An Appraisal

From an analysis of the techniques used by Riddle and Spalding in their pleas to the court and jury, it is evident that they failed to make the most of the case for the defense. The argument made by counsel for the defense was a combination of appeals, one part to the court and jury, another for the benefit of the spectators, the newspapers, and the people of the Western Reserve. Under the circumstances of the case, this latter argument could lead only to a verdict of guilty, rather than acquittal.

That men who were as prominent and legally competent as Spalding and Riddle should harm the cause of their clients through pure negligence or inadvertence is difficult to believe. On the other hand, there is much evidence that the inconsistencies in the defense pleas were intentional, and that no matter how strong an argument had been made on the law and facts, the defendants would still have been convicted.

It is our purpose to (1) examine the failures of counsel in their pleas, (2) list the circumstances under which the arguments were made, determining the factors which may have persuaded counsel to make this "legally ineffective" argument, and (3) draw some conclusions.

There would be little purpose in examining the summary of Spalding in detail, for it was almost totally an argument on the constitutionality of the Fugitive Slave Act. The major burden of presenting the case for the defense fell to Riddle, whose plea required almost a day and a half, and whose argument provides the basis for the criticism here.

There was no doubt that Riddle was one of the most effective speakers and one of the best lawyers in the Western Reserve. Forty-three years old when he served in this case, Riddle had served as prosecuting attorney for Geauga County for six years. He had been elected to the Ohio legislature in 1848 and became the acknowledged leader of the freesoilers in the House. From 1852 to 1858 he was prosecuting attorney for Cuyahoga County. It is with this background in mind that we must view the argument of Albert Riddle in the case of the *United States v. Bushnell.*

A considerable portion of Riddle's argument consisted of (1) an attack on the prosecution for failing to prove John either the slave of Bacon or a slave of anyone, (2) proof that John was "kidnapped" rather than taken by legal process, (3) insistence that if John was taken by legal process, the defendants did not know it, and (4) a claim that the prosecution had not proved Bushnell to be one of the rescuers. Each of these arguments—some more valid than others—was at least worth placing before a jury.

Yet at the very outset of entering his pleas—before any of the above arguments had been made—Riddle said: "As they (Jennings) and party thus held him in his agony, the defendant and his associates approached; and, knowing John was a slave in Kentucky, and how and by whom he was there held, that he had escaped, and how and for what purpose he was seized and held; and knowing all this, they put forth their strong hands, wrenching John from the grasp of his captors, consigned him to the boundless realm of freedom! This is what they did and all they did, and in so doing they obeyed the laws of God, etc."[5]

Thus, what Riddle did was to launch his summary with a statement that, while his clients might be guilty under man-made law, they were not guilty under the laws of God. How could he thereafter expect a jury to believe his arguments, denying as they did all he had said in the opening statement? Speaking of this error, Cochran says, "Almost any jury, after such a statement, would come to the conclusion that the main question of fact had been settled adversely to defendant and that the rest was an argument on the law, addressed to the Court—or the public—but not to them. What did they care about legal quibbles?"[6]

What the verdict would have been had Riddle not made these oratorical concessions at the outset cannot, of course, be determined. What can be said is that on the basis of the arguments made *after* this statement, an impartial jury could reasonably have reached a verdict of not guilty. Riddle had considerable strength in the following arguments:

1. *Was the captured Negro, John, Bacon's slave?* Bacon had described his slave John, in the power of attorney, as about 5 feet 6 or 8 inches high, heavy set, copper colored and weighing about 140 or 150 pounds. On the other hand, witnesses from Oberlin described John Price, the Negro who was seized, as 5 feet 4 or 5 inches high, weighing 125 to 130 pounds, and as being "black," "very black," "decidedly black." On the question of identity, at least, the case for the prosecution was not at all certain.
2. *Was John properly arrested?* Even admitting that this was the slave, the only paper shown to John when he was arrested was the warrant, which was invalid, having been issued in the Southern District of Ohio, whereas Oberlin was within the jurisdiction of the Northern District. The invalidity of the warrant was virtually admitted by the prosecution, who depended on the validity of the power of attorney rather than the warrant. The power of attorney, however, did not contain an accurate description of John, nor did the captors of John act at any time as though they relied on the power of attorney as authority for the arrest. "Legal" though the argument may have been, it had merit.

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[5] Shipherd, p. 45.
[6] Cochran, p. 146.

3. *Did the defendants know John was taken by legal process, if he was?* Here again an impartial jury might have answered in the negative. When the rescuers asked the captors of John to show their authority, they were shown the warrant, which was invalid. There was a conflict of testimony as to whether the power of attorney was exhibited.

Remembering that a negative answer to any one of the above questions would result in acquittal, even though Bushnell had participated in the rescue, it becomes apparent that Riddle, *with an impartial jury and an impartial judge*, may have done great damage to his case. Nor did his florid conclusion aid his cause in any degree:

> I have sunk the lawyer—I have sunk the advocate, that I might stand before you in my unsullied manhood and appeal to you as men.
>
> I have forgotten party prejudices that I might remember and remind you of issues involving the common rights, franchises, and liberties of us all as citizens of a great free State.
>
> I have sunk the individual interest of the Defendant, that I might appeal to you to protect the interest of all living things, and vindicate the dignity and sovereignty of our glorious commonwealth.[7]

It seems that District Attorney Belden was correct to some extent when he said in opening his final argument, that he scarcely knew whether to address the court, the jury, or the audience. "For three days," he said, "the crowd has been addressed; not the court, not the jury."[8]

Conditions Affecting the Trial

Circumstances under which the argument was made, and the factors which may have persuaded Riddle to make this "legally ineffective" plea are described in the ensuing paragraphs.

The Court

Judge Hiram V. Willson could not be said to be impartial in this case. Aside from the attacks made upon him by Republican newspapers and later biased writers on the rescue, there is much evidence in the record of the case to show that the defendants could not expect and did not get a completely fair trial. When the Grand Jury was summoned, Judge Willson did not confine his remarks to what would and would not constitute a violation of the Fugitive Slave Act, but made "an intemperate assault upon the character and motives of conscientious objectors to that law."[9] His charge to the jury similarly showed evidence of bias, for the identity of John Price as the slave of Bacon was assumed by the court, rather than submitted to the jury.[10] Furthermore, once Bushnell had been convicted, Judge Willson ruled that the same jury should hear the other cases. Judge Willson also permitted the father of the boy who had betrayed John Price to sit on the Federal Grand Jury which indicted Bushnell.

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[7] Shipherd, p. 62.
[8] Shipherd, p. 82.
[9] Cochran, p. 133.

The Jury

Although the district was predominantly Republican, this was a "struck" jury consisting of twelve Democrats, taken from a panel made up by Democratic officials. The panel consisted of forty names, twelve of which were "struck" off the list by each side in the case. Since the original panel of forty had thirty Democrats and ten Republicans, it is apparent that obtaining a jury of Democrats was a simple task for the prosecution.

Galbreath, in speaking of this "loading" of the jury, says, "The attorneys for the indicted men had complained that the jury selected . . . all belonged to the political party of the Buchanan administration. This claim was not denied. The obvious defense of the district attorney was that only through a jury thus selected could the government hope to secure a conviction. On this question of slavery and the enforcement of the Fugitive Slave Law, it was next to impossible to get a verdict from a jury politically divided."[11]

If Galbreath's statement of the situation is correct (and feeling on the question of the Fugitive Slave Act ran so high at this time in the Western Reserve that there is no reason to doubt him) then it was next to impossible for the defense, no matter how effective an argument was made, to get a favorable decision.

Democratic Politics

The Fugitive Slave Act was passed by a Democratic administration, and was being enforced by one. The judge was a Democrat, the jury was Democratic, the prosecutors were Democratic. The retention of southern Democratic support by the Buchanan administration depended upon a faithful and vigorous enforcement of the Fugitive Slave Law. There is every reason to believe that the main object of the indictment and trial was political,[12] either for the purpose of appeasing the South, and/or, as was suggested in some quarters, in the hope of ruining the Republican Party. As the *Ohio Statesman*, a Democratic newspaper, pointed out in April, 1859: "Presuming upon the perverted sentiment of the majority of the people of their village, and instigated by the harangues of political promoters and professors, the Oberlinites have long defied the law. They have now found that it is not altogether powerless to vindicate itself. . . . The Republican Party has seen the day of its utmost fervor and strength, and its decline will now be rapid."[13]

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[10] Shipherd, p. 84.
[11] Charles B. Galbreath, *History of Ohio* (Chicago and New York, 1925), II, 228.
[12] Cochran, p. 133.
[13] In Cleveland *Plain Dealer*, Apr. 20, 1859.

Further indication of the political nature of the trial is found in the fact that three of the men indicted clearly had nothing to do with the rescue, though they were prominent antislavery men in the Western Reserve. District Attorney Belden admitted, in releasing three of the Wellington men, that "the Oberlinites are the ones the Government wishes to punish."[14]

Republican Politics and Republican Audience

The trial of the rescuers provided a perfect opportunity for the Republicans to arouse public sentiment in the Western Reserve against the Fugitive Slave Act, slavery, and the Democratic administration. The Republican state convention was to be held the end of May, and the trial could thus be used to convince moderate Republicans that a strong antislavery plank was needed. The people who crowded the courtroom to hear the trial were a highly partisan group.[15] They applauded the rhetorical efforts of defense counsel, no matter how irrelevant to the case. When Riddle said that, if he had an opportunity to aid a slave in violation of the Fugitive Slave Law, he would do so, there was "a stamping and clapping of hands."[16]

Furthermore, counsel for the defense were ambitious politically, and here was a perfect opportunity for self-advertisement.[17] As a matter of fact, both Riddle and Spalding were elected to Congress, Riddle in the fall of 1860, and Spalding in 1862, 1864, and 1866.[18] When Riddle stood in his "unsullied manhood," willing to aid fugitive slaves, praising clients who had obeyed a "Higher Law," and when Spalding said, "Agitate! Agitate! Agitate! is my motto, until the occasion for agitation is removed,"[19] both gave Cochran cause to state that their legally ineffective argument was the result of political ambition.

Conclusions

Why, then, did defense counsel, and Riddle in particular, make an appeal to the public at large—an argument inconsistent with the attempt to secure acquittal for their clients? It has already been pointed out that Riddle could hardly have made the plea out of negligence or inadvertence, and that Cochran believed that these politically ambitious men had found a convenient forum in which to air their views, and had worked it for all it was worth. The *Plain Dealer* concurred when it stated, "The three Oberlin Attorneys engaged in the Rescue cases are killing two birds with one stone each. They are defending the Rescuers and running for Congress at the same time."[20]

[14] Norwalk (O.) *Reflector*, May 17, 1859.

[15] Galbreath, p. 228.

[16] Cleveland *Plain Dealer*, April 13, 1859.

[17] James Ford Rhodes, *History of the United States, 1850–1908* (New York, 1928), II, 319.

[18] Wilbur H. Siebert, *The Underground Railway From Slavery to Freedom* (New York, 1899), p. 334.

[19] Shipherd, p. 83.

[20] Apr. 14, 1859.

Another hypothesis, just as consistent with the facts as is that of Cochran, is that defense counsel knew there was little hope of securing acquittal. Thus while a case had to be made for the defense, there would be greater publicity and political value for the Republican and antislavery causes if the appeal made was a broad one, even though it might be inconsistent with the clients' immediate welfare.

The Appeal

Following the trial in the District Court the cases of Bushnell and Langston were taken to the Supreme Court of the State of Ohio on writs of *habeas corpus*. There defense counsel argued that the Fugitive Slave Act was unconstitutional, that a federal law and a decision by the Supreme Court of the United States upholding that federal law were not binding on the State of Ohio. This was, in effect, the same states' rights argument being used by southern extremists. In a three-to-two decision the court denied the writ.

Chief Justice Swan, whose decision cost him a renomination by the Republicans,[21] said in his opinion:

> The sense of justice of the people of Ohio has been shocked by some of the unjust provisions of the fugitive acts. It is not the authority of Congress to legislate that they deny, but it is the abuse of the power. That abuse may be remedied by Congress, and if the power to legislate is denied, the question can be put an end to by repeal—it is the only constitutional mode left; the other alternative is intestine war and resistance of our national government.
>
> All must admit that the owner of escaped slaves is entitled to their reclamation. Good faith to sister States demands it; and there would be no resistance in Ohio to a fair and just law effecting that object. No intense public feeling could be excited upon the question as to who should legislate, Congress or the States, if a proper law were passed by Congress.
>
> I must refuse the experiment of initiating disorder and governmental collision, to establish order and evenhanded justice.[22]

What might have happened had the Supreme Court granted the writ is speculative,[23] but it is clear that the federal authorities would have refused to obey the order to release the prisoners, and that a clash would have followed between the state of Ohio and federal troops if Governor Chase of Ohio had attempted to carry out the order of the Ohio Supreme Court.[24]

The entire picture was well summarized by Cochran:

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[21] Galbreath, p. 229.

[22] *Ex Parte Bushnell*, 9 Ohio State Reports 198 (1859).

[23] For an interesting story, which the writer has been unable to verify, about a later meeting between Riddle and Jeremiah Black, United States Attorney-General at the time of this case, in which Riddle told Black what he thought would have happened if the writ had been granted, see *The Biographical Cyclopedia and Portrait Gallery* (Cincinnati, 1884), III, 820.

[24] Roseboom, p. 346.

> The United States then had a standing army well equipped and largely officered by Southern men under the command of a Southern Secretary of War. How long would it have taken Robert E. Lee and Joe Johnston, with two brigades of infantry, two regiments of cavalry and two batteries of artillery to have dispersed Giddings' "Sons of Liberty" and any other force which Governor Chase could have mustered? Ohio could not count on the assistance or even the sympathy of any other State in the Union, and—what was still worse—a majority of her own people would have been found opposed to the violence and disturbance of the peace, occasioned by what they would surely have regarded as the aggressive and irresponsible action of fanatics and men of one idea. There were indications that Democratic partisans would have welcomed an outbreak which would have called for the interposition of the Federal power. The result of such a contest—if initiated by volunteers or State militia—would almost surely have strengthened the Administration and established complete control of the Government, in all its branches by the slave-power, who could then have carried out their entire program in the United States and avoided the resort to secession. If Judge Swan had joined Judges Brinkerhoff and Sutliff, and the Supreme Court of Ohio had ordered the release of Bushnell and Langston, Governor Chase would either have had to use force and thus bring on a conflict with the United States, or would have been obliged to back down. In either case, the State would have suffered and the prestige of the Republican party would have been damaged beyond repair. It would have been impossible then for the party, or any other formed on similar lines, to have commanded any large following and made successful opposition from the chains of an oppressive oligarchy which it was just beginning to loosen and was destined to cast off. Even those who rejected him as unworthy to be a Judge of our Supreme Court, must have rejoiced, later, that Judge Swan spoke 'the words of truth and soberness,' and that the odium of inaugurating civil war in this country was cast upon the South. . . .[25]

How much significance can be attached to the entire affair, aside from the Supreme Court decision, is not clear. The least that can be said is that it was one more instance of the violation of the Fugitive Slave Act, and one more case of enforcement of a law which aroused the ire of a great many Northerners.

But in Ohio it meant even more. The Fugitive Slave Law had escaped criticism in northern Ohio because little attempt had been made to enforce it there. The events of this case, however, opened the law and slavery to renewed denunciation in the press, in the church, and in public mass meetings. It resulted in a strong antislavery, anti-Fugitive Slave Law plank in the platform of the Republican Party in Ohio. It also led to a great antislavery mass meeting in Cleveland on May 24, 1859. In short, it helped to solidify public opinion in the Western Reserve on the slavery issue, and the following year the Western Reserve sent to Congress men firmly opposed to making further concessions to the slave power.

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[25] Cochran, pp. 213–214.

THE MASS PROTEST MEETING

As soon as the "Oberlinites" were arrested, a wave of protest swept the Western Reserve. Although the mass meeting of May 24, 1859, has traditionally symbolized this discontent, some brief mention should be made of the somewhat bizarre series of speech situations preceding the famous antislavery mass meeting.

The "Feast of Felons"

This feast was held only a few days after the indictment and arrest of the rescuers. Shipherd describes the scene in which, on January 11, 1859, "thirty seven good citizens of Lorain County, indicted by the Grand Jury . . . sat down with their wives and a number of invited guests to a sumptuous repast at the Palmer House. . . . Among them were venerable gray-headed men, some of the early settlers of Lorain county–men who had filled the forest and built the humble log-cabins, school-houses and churches of the wilderness–noble men, good men, and true men–men of Puritan and Covenanter stock, of Revolutionary blood, of spotless reputation–indicted criminals!"[26] Feeling ran high at the feast, as can be seen by some of the toasts given:

> *The Alien and Sedition Law of 1798 and the Fugitive Slave Act of 1850*—alike arbitrary, undemocratic and unconstitutional. As did the one, so may the other rouse the country to a political and moral revolution which shall restore the doctrines of Personal Liberty and State Rights which centralizing power has wantonly violated.
>
> *The Felons' Feast.*
>
> *The Prosecution*—will it subdue us? Shall it clear the town of us?—can it crush us out? (a response of "No! No! No!").
>
> *Our Hostess*—If Uncle Sam shall take us to board, may we have her for help![27]

Speeches and Activities of the Rescuers in Jail

Following the conviction of Bushnell the remaining trials were put off until the July term, with the exception of that of Charles Langston. The court proposed to use the same jury in all of the cases and, following a violent protest at this proposal, the defense declared it would not appear before the same jury. Whereupon the court ordered the prisoners taken into custody, and on the prisoners' refusal to promise to return to court, to give bail, and to enter a recognizance, they were confined in the Cleveland jail.

On Sunday, April 17, 1859, from the jail, Professor Peck delivered a sermon to an audience of several thousand people. According to newspaper reports, "the extensive jail yard was literally packed with human bodies."

[26] Shipherd, pp. 5–6.
[27] Shipherd, pp. 7–11.

Following the sermon many of the visitors passed through the prison in order that they might shake hands with the prisoners.[28]

Later the prisoners established a makeshift print shop and published *The Rescuer* on alternate Mondays. On one occasion four hundred Oberlin Sunday School children came to the jail, beating on its doors with their "angel wings," and heard their superintendent, J. M. Fitch, speak. All in all, the confinement of the rescuers was hardly an arduous one; in fact "A Voice from the Jug" written by "Dungeoner" for the Cleveland *Plain Dealer,* but "accidentally left out," is quoted by Shipherd as saying in behalf of the prisoners, "not feeling very guilty, we do feel very happy. . . . A steady current of callers eddies through our room, leaving a cheerful sediment of anecdote, witticism, discussion, argument, querying and comfort."[29]

Setting of the Mass Meeting

As general unrest became more and more apparent in the Western Reserve, the Republican party encouraged it and began to make political capital of it. Cleveland offered an ideal spot to demonstrate the solidarity of opposition to the law. Not only was it the center of population in the area, but it was the site of the confinement of the rescuers, and its public square was so situated in reference to the jail as to make it possible to use the jail itself as a rostrum and the prisoners as speakers. In this setting met the "foes of Slavery and Despotism and the friends of State and Individual Rights."[30] Special trains from all parts of northern Ohio brought hundreds of participants. Delegates from several Ohio cities formed processions and marched to the square. Brass bands were much in evidence, as were banners and stirring slogans. In all, the crowd was estimated to be in excess of six thousand.[31]

Speakers

The oratory of the day came from both sides of the wall. Not only did the audience hear Governor Salmon P. Chase, Joshua Giddings, Asa Mahan, formerly of Oberlin College, and others, but the prisoners spoke as well, each in turn. Some of the remarks were strongly inflammatory in nature. For example: "You have men and brothers in yonder jail; now what shall we do? Let us exhaust every law and legal means in our power, and if then we should fail, which God forbid, let us show that Ohio shall be free by the right of the people."[32]

Other speeches, like Salmon Chase's, were, to the highly partisan crowd at least, disappointingly tame. For all the high-powered oratory, the meeting ended with surprising orderliness, as tired participants returned to their homes and fields.

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[28] Cleveland *Herald,* Apr. 18, 1859.
[29] Shipherd, pp. 92–93.
[30] Shipherd, p. 247.
[31] Robert S. Fletcher, *A History of Oberlin College* (Oberlin, 1943), I, p. 410.
[32] J. W. Vance of Mt. Vernon, in Shipherd, p. 252.

Results

The meeting had no immediate result for the prisoners, of course; it is doubtful whether any was expected. It was primarily a warning to the federal government that the Fugitive Slave Law was dead in northern Ohio.[33]

THE AFTERMATH

With all of the tension and furor involved, the final disposition of the rescuers was abrupt and almost anticlimactic. Threatened with a countertrial of the "kidnappers" of John, the United States Attorney proposed to the counsel for the rescuers that suits on both sides be dropped. The rescuers consented and on July 6 were freed.[34]

A final demonstration greeted Bushnell on his release, July 11, 1859, including a one-hundred-gun salvo, and salutes by the Oberlin Hook and Ladder Company and the Wellington "Sax Horn Band."

Certainly "one in the chain of events which led directly to the election of Lincoln and the Civil War,"[35] the Oberlin-Wellington Rescue and its subsequent developments—all given extensive coverage by the Ohio press and by special reporters from such papers as the New York *Tribune*, the Worcester *Spy*, and the Pittsburgh *Commercial Journal*—attracted the attention of the nation. To emancipationists everywhere the speeches of a politically ambitious lawyer defending, not his clients, but an idea, gave "a fresh impetus to our noble cause," in Garrison's words.[36] To the Southerners these same speeches underscored the intransigence of the antislavery forces in the Western Reserve.

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[33] Wilbur Greely Burroughs, "Oberlin's Part in the Slavery Conflict," *Ohio Archeological and Historical Pubs.*, XX (1911), 300.

[34] James H. Fairchild, *Oberlin: The Colony and the College* (Oberlin, 1883), p. 131.

[35] Fletcher, I, 413.

[36] William Lloyd Garrison to James Monroe, Apr. 22, 1859 (Monroe Papers, Oberlin Col. Library).

Robert Barnwell Rhett's Speech, July 4, 1859

H. HARDY PERRITT

6

I

In April, 1859, six prominent citizens of Grahamville, South Carolina, addressed a letter to Robert Barnwell Rhett which read, in part: "Death has torn from the State many of your old comrades; almost alone you are left to tell the story of federal aggressions and of southern submission. Many of your predictions are daily being verified. . . . It will not, therefore, be surprising that many of your old friends would once more like to hear your opinions upon public affairs. . . ."[1] Thirty-one years earlier the same Robert Barnwell Rhett had said, "To talk more must be a dastard's refuge." At that time he had urged "open resistance to the laws of the Union" as the only course left for the South to pursue since "repeated remonstrances" had failed to prevent the "tariff of abominations." Little did this twenty-eight-year-old member of the South Carolina House of Representatives realize how much more talking he would do before he should give the signal for secession to the South in 1859. He had continued to assert himself in the state legislature; as attorney general of South Carolina; in both houses of the United States Congress; as owner of the Charleston *Mercury;* and as editor of John C. Calhoun's Washington newspaper, *The Spectator.*[2]

During these thirty-one years his fervid phrases and unyielding position had won for Rhett a reputation as a terrible, fire-eating disunionist. Governor Benjamin F. Perry described him as "always a disunionist who hated the Union from the bottom of his heart."[3] Another contemporary wrote in his journal that Rhett "gave in" to Calhoun's nullification doctrine "because he thought it would result in disunion."[4] John Quincy Adams considered him "a South Carolina nullifier of the absurdist stamp, a compound of wild democracy and ironbound slavery combined with the feudal cramp of state sovereignty." Adams called his speaking "the *ne plus ultra* of South Carolina rhetoric—ranting for eloquence; emphatic inconsistency and absurdity."[5] Charles M. Wiltse considers him "master of all the arts of the demagogue when bombast would serve his turn, or silky and smooth as mellowed honey when persuasiveness was needed."[6]

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[1] Charleston (S.C.) *Mercury,* Apr. 25, 1859. Signers of the letter were Isidore Lartigue, Thos. H. Gregorie, Jno. H. Howard, Edward Lynch, Thos. E. Screven, and Wm. Youmans.

[2] For details of the early period of Rhett's public career see H. Hardy Perritt, "Robert Barnwell Rhett: Prophet of Resistance, 1828–1834," *Southern Speech Jour.,* XXI (1955), 103–119.

[3] *Reminiscences of Public Men* (Philadelphia, 1883), pp. 129–134.

Although Rhett's speeches and articles had always been characterized by talk of oppression of the South by the "foul plunderers" in the North, and filled with threats of secession and defense of southern rights in the "tented field," he had not admitted to the title of "disunionist" until 1850. Upon returning from the Nashville Convention of that year, where he wrote the "Address to the Southern States," Rhett had declared: "To maintain the Union is to acquiesce in the destruction of the Constitution; and to maintain the Constitution we must dissolve the Union."[7] Elected to the United States Senate as Calhoun's heir, Rhett resigned in 1852, after two stormy sessions, because his State refused in convention to secede.[8] From then until 1859 he disdained "to talk more." Instead, he operated his two plantations, where he held 190 slaves, and guided his son in the editorship of the Charleston *Mercury*. His family and friends referred to that seven years as a period of "profound political retirement."[9] By 1859 Rhett "gloried in the name of disunionist,"[10] and decided, apparently in collaboration with William Lowndes Yancey of Alabama and Edmund Ruffin of Virginia, that it was expedient to begin to declaim again. The South must be awakened to the ruin imminent in the approaching election of 1860. Thus, Rhett accepted the invitation from the citizens of Grahamville.

II

Grahamville was a small village of summer homes of wealthy rice planters in Beaufort District, a part of Rhett's old congressional district in the lowcountry near Savannah, Georgia. Rhett had been reared in the nearby village of Beaufort and lived most of his life in the neighboring District of Colleton, where he first roared "resistance" in 1828. It was there in the low-country of South Carolina that an abundance of blue indigo, white cotton, golden rice, and black Negroes had produced the most aristocratic slave culture in the South and a supersensitivity to encroachments upon the "peculiar institution" of the region. With only a little over two per cent of the white population of the state, Beaufort District contained over eight per cent of the slaves. There were almost five times as many slaves as whites throughout the low-country districts; the state-wide ratio was less than four to three. At the same time, the ratio of slave population to free was the highest in South Carolina of all the states. Furthermore, the slaves were held in relatively large blocks; 102 South Carolinians owned more than 200 slaves each, while only 152 people held as many in the remaining slaveholding states; eight South Carolinians owned 500 or more slaves, while only seven persons in the rest of the South combined held as many.[11]

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[4] "McCarter's Journal," MSS., Library of Congress. There is no record of McCarter's initials or who he was; he was apparently a well-educated citizen of South Carolina who had personal acquaintance with many of the leaders of the South. When he began the journal in 1860, he had just returned from Europe and was alarmed to find the Union threatened.

[5] Charles Francis Adams, ed., *Memoirs of J. Q. Adams* (New York, 1876), I, 315.

[6] *John C. Calhoun, Sectionalist, 1840–1850* (New York, 1951), p. 52.

[7] Charleston *Daily Mercury*, July–Aug.; Charleston *Daily Courier*, July 20, 1850.

[8] H. Hardy Perritt, "Robert Barnwell Rhett: Disunionist Heir of Calhoun, 1850–1852," *Southern Speech Jour.*, XXIV (1958), 38–55.

[9] Elise Rhett Lewis to Laura White, R. B. Rhett personal papers, in possession of I'on Rhett, Charleston, S.C.

[10] Allan Nevins, *The Emergence of Lincoln* (New York, 1950), II, 216; Charleston *Courier*, July 20; Charleston *Mercury*, July 20, 1850.

Although the population of Grahamville in 1859 is not known, at least thirty families had residences there. Ten physicians and a dentist were among the citizenry, and two schools, a gristmill, a blacksmith shop, and five stores served the village.[12]

A large crowd from out of town began to assemble in Grahamville on Saturday, July 2, in anticipation of Rhett's speech. Included in the group were about 120 men in uniform divided among the Beaufort District Cavalry, the St. Peter's Guard, and the Effingham Hussars. Rhett, accompanied by his son, Edmund, also arrived on Saturday, presumably from his Ashepoo plantation, about forty miles north of Grahamville. On Sunday the Rhetts attended Holy Trinity Church, where the troops were present in a body, and heard a sermon by a Reverend Wigfall. There is no record of the content of the sermon or of other celebration on Sunday.

By dawn of the Fourth "a very large concourse from the surrounding country and from Georgia" had assembled at the camp ground. At 10:00 A.M. James M. Moore, a young lawyer from Gillisonville, gave a preliminary address, of which there is no record. At the conclusion of Moore's speech, Captain Screven, commanding officer of the Beaufort Cavalry, introduced Rhett: "Fellow Citizens: Our former Representative to Congress from the Third Congressional District, approved, faithful, consistent, resolute and staunch in defense of the rights of the South, at all and every hazard; our former Senator, our distinguished fellow-citizen, the Hon. R. Barnwell Rhett, has gratified popular expectation by consenting to address his fellow-citizens today. The Committee of Invitation, the Hon. Barnwell and his son, are invited by the Squadron to take seats on the stand." The crowd greeted Rhett with "prolonged and enthusiastic" applause.[13]

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[11] Ollinger Crenshaw, *The Slave States in the Presidential Election of 1860* (Baltimore, 1945), pp. 198–228; Charles E. Cauthen, *South Carolina Goes to War, 1860–1865* (Chapel Hill, 1950), pp. 1–30; *Population of the U.S. in 1860; Compiled from the Original Returns of the Eighth Census* (Washington, 1864).

[12] Nellie H. Fripp, "Grahamville," MSS. in possession of Mrs. Fripp, Beaufort, S.C.; Grace Fox Perry, articles in the Charleston *News and Courier*, Jan. 16–19, 1949.

The *Charleston Courier* dispatched a reporter to cover the speech and on July 6 published his transcript of the address. The reporter admitted, however, that at one point his notes were "ravished by a puff of wind." The following day the Rhett-owned *Mercury* chided the *Courier* for presuming that any reporter could follow the rapid utterance of Rhett, and proceeded to carry the "authentic" text. The latter version was later published in a life sketch of Rhett.[14] The ideas and structure of the two versions of the speech are essentially the same, but the language is quite different—the *Courier* text containing only about 6000 words and the *Mercury* version about 8000. Since Rhett apparently intended posterity to have the wording that he published in his newspaper, all quotations have been selected from that version unless otherwise indicated.

III

There was little new for Rhett to say about sectional issues in 1859. Therefore, instead of attempting to develop new lines of thought, he adapted to current conditions the same arguments he and other secessionists had advanced for many years. Clearly before him were his many failures to persuade South Carolina—not to mention the rest of the South—to follow his recommendations in other sectional crises. He must have felt sure that this was his last chance to arouse southern action before it was too late to save the slave civilization and to win his personal vindication. Moreover, he was highly sensitive to what the moderates and nationalists were saying at the time; he had lost too many battles to those who would conciliate the North to ignore them. Typical of the attitude of the cooperationists was the hope expressed by Alexander H. Stephens in a speech two days earlier in Augusta, Georgia: "All those great sectional issues . . . have been amicably and satisfactorily adjusted, without the sacrifice of any principle, or the loss of any essential right. At this time, there is not a ripple upon the surface. The country was never in a profounder quiet, or the people from one extent of it to the other, in more perfect enjoyment of the blessings of peace and prosperity secured by those institutions, for which we should feel no less grateful than proud."[15]

While Rhett may not have seen or heard an account of the speech by Stephens, he knew well the nature of such thought. He undertook, therefore, to counteract it by restating his old resistance arguments in support of a new proposition designed for the times. His central plea, which he implied throughout, but did not state explicitly until the concluding paragraph of the speech, was to become the slogan of all southern secessionists: the South must unite to elect a sympathetic president in 1860—and succeed or secede. Rhett saw hope in either alternative: "If our rights are victorious in the next presidential election, we may consider it as a kind augury of a more auspicious future. If they are overthrown, let this election be the last contest between the North and South; and the long weary night of our dishonor and humiliation be dispersed at last, by the glorious day-spring of a Southern Confederacy." He supported his new challenge with the same arguments he had been adapting and amplifying for thirty years: (1) since the War of 1812, the northern majority had attempted to "build up a consolidated democracy for the predominance of the North over the South" to replace the original "confederated republic" which was established to obtain "protection from foreign powers"; (2) after southern concessions for two generations, the North intended to use the election of a president in 1860 as a means of gaining complete "rule over the South"; (3) the South, through expansion into tropical America and resistance to northern encroachments, would have to prove to the world that "order and protection are not incompatible with free institutions"; (4) further delay in resisting oppression by the "distinct and antagonistic" North would result only in emancipation of the slaves and utter ruin of the South.

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[13] Charleston *Courier*, July 6; Charleston *Mercury*, July 7, 1859.

[14] Daniel Wallace, *The Political Life and Services of the Hon. R. Barnwell Rhett* (Cahaba, Ala., 1859), p. 11.

[15] Augusta (Ga.) *Daily Constitutionalist*, July 10, 1859.

In the introduction, after identifying his sectional convictions with those of John C. Calhoun and George McDuffie, Rhett complimented his old Congressional District on its support of his resistance arguments for thirty years. He did not see fit to devote major attention to demonstrating "how false have been the expectations of peace to the South from the California Compromise of 1850; and how completely have events justified the policy you supported to meet its evils." He was satisfied to cite the Kansas question as proof of the failure of the Compromise of 1850. He was equally content to ridicule the northern conception of the government as a "consolidated democracy" by contending: "Nothing was easier than to set up such a government. But it is a notorious fact that the formation of the Constitution of the United States was a most difficult enterprise. . . . The question was, how could we be so united as to *be one people*, in relation to foreign nations for self-protection—and yet, in relation to one another, be separate, distinct and independent states."

After attempting to show that the North would have seceded during the War of 1812 except for the sudden peace—after which "the apprehensions which drove us together in the initial Union no longer existed"—Rhett moved on to the growth of northern prominence in the government. He cited the tariff of 1816 and the Missouri question as the first steps in northern domination. He contended that when the Missouri question revealed the intention of the North to exclude the South from the territories, "The rights of the South and the integrity of the Constitution ought to have been maintained at all hazards. The contest would have ended in one of three ways. The rights of the South would have been conceded; the Constitution would have been amended; or the Union would have been dissolved." He employed an eminent southern team to refute the "political quacks" who thought the slavery issue could be settled by "concession on the part of the South": he quoted Thomas Jefferson to the effect that the Missouri question was "a fire-bell in the night" that warned of a series of events which would end in the destruction of the Union, and he mentioned that Calhoun had "died also in despair of the present confederacy."

Having disposed of the past efforts at compromise, Rhett moved to predict the future. He believed that the North hoped to gain complete control of the national government by winning the 1860 election. He considered the northern policy on increased tariffs, internal improvements, "land for the landless," squatter sovereignty, and the abolition of slavery as "their measures of policy. And the end these are designed to accomplish is a consolidated democracy, limitless in power. The North is to rule the South."

Although he had always held the Constitution sacred, and had gone to great lengths to prove that secession was constitutional and that the northern policy of consolidation was not, he argued on this occasion: "Now, my friends, whether such a policy is consistent with the Constitution of the United States or not, is of no sort of consequence. If it is, then the Constitution establishes a sectional despotism over the South. And if it is not, then the Constitution is abolished by the North, the only power which can maintain it. The South being a minority, is powerless to enforce its terms by legislation; and if she submits to its abrogation by the North, she accepts a naked despotism." He went on to reject unoppressive government if the North should offer it, contending that "liberty does not consist in the mere absence of oppression, but in the right and security to be free." He thus closed the case against further compromise. In order to protect the institution of slavery and to demonstrate to the world "that all the races of men are not equal, but that the Caucasian and the African may be benignly combined in one society–the one slave, the other free," he claimed for the South, "the broad expanse of the tropics on this continent . . . for thirty degrees on both sides of the Equator for our civil conquest and possession." Finally, Rhett urged that the South delay no longer in seeking freedom from the North. In this appeal he lapsed into his habitual mixed metaphors:

> Shall we wait for this blissful consummation—when the fires of insurrection will light up our homes and the North shall stand by to watch and guard the conflagration? Such things will probably never be, because the South will not await their fearful coming but will anticipate them. When will she anticipate them and act out her redemption? When will her mighty heart beat free in the enjoyment of her rights, safe under the shield of her own protection; and, casting off the incubus of ignorance and error and fear, which now like a foul toad sits upon her bosom, rise up and command the liberation and independence of the South?

After a condemnation of the "proud robbers" and the "vulgar crew of plunderers and fanatics" who had been raised to power in the North by "continued submissions" of the South, Rhett concluded his speech with the statement of the central idea quoted above and the following peroration:

> Gentlemen: Rawlins Lowndes declared in our State Convention that the only epitaph he desired was that he opposed to the last the adoption of the Constitution of the United States by South Carolina. The sagacity of this patriot stands vindicated by the events which surround us. Should the public regard, after I am gone, ever reach my humble services, let it be remembered that after twenty years of earnest effort to preserve the Union, by keeping it within the limitations of the Constitution, and arresting its fatal tendency to despotism, I turned at last to the salvation of my native land—the South—and in my latter years did all I could to dissolve her connection with the North, and to establish for her a Southern Confederacy.

Rhett's highly partisan Grahamville audience gave him "a burst of spontaneous cheering, which lasted many minutes" at the end of his speech. The dinner celebration which followed was replete with toasts lauding his sagacity, consistency, and patriotism. He was called the "invincible and consistent banner-bearer of the Third Congressional District," whose people had "always appreciated his sterling worth and now recognized in him the ring of the truly great." A toast which summed up the sentiments of the day was: "The election of a Black Republican President in 1860–the signal for the dissolution of the Federal Union, and the establishment of a Southern Confederacy."[16]

IV

Doubtless Grahamville was chosen as the site for the speech because it was hoped that the favorable cheers would reverberate throughout the South, reaching the ears of numbers of potential secessionists. Although he was speaking to a highly partisan audience at Grahamville, Rhett expected his words, through the public press, to reach citizens all over South Carolina and other slaveholding states who were much less sympathetic toward his views. This not uncommon dual audience of the political speaker resulted in a speech which undertook to arouse the partisans, and to convince the doubters and disbelievers of the soundness of disunion. Perhaps, therefore, the omission of any mention of separate state secession was as important as anything Rhett did say. He did not disavow separate secession by South Carolina, but he called for united action by all the South. He did not feel compelled, however, to say what he would recommend if Southern unity should prove impossible again. Furthermore, Rhett's avoidance of specific statement of his proposition until the conclusion seems to indicate a conscious arrangement of the speech to appeal to the neutral or opposed audience.

Rhett was a hero to the citizens of Beaufort District; yet he considered it desirable to establish his farsightedness, and unselfish, consistent, and statesmanlike nature with greater clarity. Thus, he devoted several minutes to identifying himself with highly respected southern leaders and in justifying his resignation from the Senate in 1852; similarly, he made a bid for the sympathy of the audience for his thirty years' efforts in behalf of "freedom" for the South. On the other hand, there seems to have been little deliberate effort on the part of the speaker to arouse emotional fervor in his Grahamville audience. The situation, audience polarization, and the speaker's manner of delivery probably produced emotional intensity which cannot be appraised now. Also, emotional responses must have been elicited by the use of such stereotypes as "freedom," "despotism," "fanatics," "bloody contest," "ruin and dishonor," "proud robbers," "lust for plunder," and "fires of insurrection." Doubtless, too, enthusiasm was aroused by the mere mention of patriots like Jefferson and Calhoun. It is noteworthy, however, that there was only the most casual mention, in the middle of the speech, of the "revolution of 1776."

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[16] Charleston *Courier*, July 6, 1859.

Despite the efforts and expectation, the low-country enthusiasm for Rhett's speech did not spread. Except for publication in the two Charleston newspapers and several small South Carolina papers, the speech was disregarded generally by the public press.[17] Among random mention by newspapers outside of South Carolina was the comment in the New York *Tribune:* "The Hon. H. [*sic*] Barnwell Rhett delivered a disunion speech at Grahamville, S.C., on the 4th of July last. He is said to be willing to occupy the seat in Congress at present held by the Hon. L. M. Keitt."[18] The Washington *National Era*, a strong Union and abolitionist paper, did not mention the Rhett speech but carried an account of Union toasts offered at a public dinner in Columbia, on July 4, with the comment: "Mr. Rhett will find that even in South Carolina there are many who will not follow his lead."[19] In November, 1859, the *Slave-Holder*, a fledgling paper at Cahaba, Alabama, presented the name of Rhett "to the people of the South for the Presidency of the United States," and published a sketch of Rhett's life and the Grahamville speech in pamphlet form.[20]

Rhett showed considerable acumen as a rhetorical critic when he wrote of his Grahamville address several years later in his attempts at an autobiography: "How far the speech influenced the People of the South it is of course impossible to tell; but it is certain that the policy it recommended was exactly that which they subsequently pursued in the Presidential Election and in their secession from the Union."[21] As with almost all political and social phenomena, the causes of secession were too complex to permit isolation. It is likely that, other things being equal, the subsequent course of the South would have been essentially the same had Robert Barnwell Rhett never made a speech at Grahamville in 1859. Such an interpretation, however, does not dismiss the speech as insignificant. Its significance lies, not in its effect in producing secession, but in its clear statement of the real reasons for secession, after more than thirty years of agitation over sectional issues. It assumed importance, as do many notable speeches, in retrospect. This speech was the first public statement by a southern leader of renown of the course which the South was to follow in 1860. The South did what Rhett urged, not because he said it at Grahamville, but because a convergence of conditions led the masses of people to accept the convictions which Rhett had held for many years. Perhaps those convictions were more quickly articulated because of the speech. No doubt Rhett assumed more importance in history for having preceded his region in thought. Significantly, Edward Channing recommended that Rhett's "remarkable" Grahamville speech "might well be read by all persons interested in the subject" of the Civil War.[22]

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[17] Charleston *Mercury*, July 15, 16, 28, 1859, carried comments from several South Carolina newspapers and the "Pa. Inquirer."

[18] July 11, 1859.

[19] July 21, 1859.

[20] Wallace, p. 12.

[21] "Continuation of Political Life and Services," MS. Rhett Papers.

V

On July 8, four days after Rhett's speech, William L. Yancey spoke at Columbia, South Carolina, with more concrete proposals: if the Democratic Nominating Convention at Charleston failed to uphold the rights of the South in the territories, the southern delegates should withdraw and organize a new convention; if a Republican president should be elected in 1860, the South should secede before inauguration. He, too, skirted the dangerous question of separate state action, but suggested that South Carolina "lead the advance." In October of that year, the Charleston *Mercury* was ready to spell out the same program even more explicitly.[23]

Rhett enjoyed a sudden but short burst of popularity in South Carolina. He was seventh in number of votes among those elected from Charleston to the State Convention of 1860. Also, after five ballots by the legislature for governor, Rhett's name was withdrawn and Francis Pickens was elected. Nevertheless, when the State Convention met and voted unanimously to secede from the Union, it was R. Barnwell Rhett who was selected to write the "Address of the People of South Carolina to the Slave-Holding States." That document advanced the same reasons for secession which Rhett had presented in his Grahamville speech—which he had, in fact, argued for over thirty years.[24]

Rhett headed the South Carolina delegation to Montgomery, where he was appointed chairman of the committee to present President Davis to the Provisional Congress. In this capacity he delivered "a spirited and eloquent address."[25] He became chairman of the committee on foreign affairs in the Provisional Congress and chairman of the committee which drafted the permanent Confederate Constitution.

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[22] *The War for Southern Independence* (New York, 1936), p. 278.

[23] July 14, Oct. 13, 1859.

[24] "Political Life," MS., Rhett Papers.

Soon, however, he became one of the severest critics of the Davis administration—disagreeing, among many matters, on finances, foreign affairs, secret congressional sessions, and use of the veto. His intransigence gained him only unpopularity and defeat. He was not even nominated as a candidate for the Confederate Senate when the permanent government went into effect, being forced to carry on his fight against the administration through the pages of the *Mercury*. Worse still, in an attempted political comeback in 1863 he was defeated as a candidate for Congress from his old beloved district. His repudiation was complete; he was spurned by his faithful followers who had cheered his words at Grahamville in 1859.

Upon his death—in Louisiana in 1876—the Charleston *News and Courier* published a highly laudatory sketch of Rhett's life, based apparently on the Wallace sketch and Rhett's own autobiographical editions. The eulogy predicted that "history dealing with motives rather than consequences, will accord him a loftier niche in the Temple of fame." It was in this obituary that Rhett was given the title "father of secession." The writer honored Rhett's fatherhood of the fatal movement by quoting the peroration from his 1859 Grahamville speech and adding the final declaration: "This, fellow countrymen! shall be the epitaph of Robert Barnwell Rhett." If secession had succeeded, this man, who was father of secession, might have become father of his country.[26]

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[25] John Witherspoon DuBose, *The Life and Times of William Lowndes Yancey* (Birmingham, 1892), p. 587.

[26] Charleston *Daily News and Courier*, Sept. 18, 1876. For details of Rhett's life see H. Hardy Perritt, "Robert Barnwell Rhett: South Carolina Secession Spokesman," unpub. diss. (Univ. of Fla., 1954), and Laura White, *Robert Barnwell Rhett: Father of Secession* (New York, 1931).

The Lyceum Movement and Sectional Controversy, 1860

MARY W. GRAHAM

7

The most important educational influence affecting adult Americans in the nineteenth century was the lyceum movement. Founded by Josiah Holbrook in 1826, by 1835 the lyceum had over 3000 village societies designed for self-improvement.[1] Mechanic's Institutes and Mercantile Library Associations likewise played a significant role in presenting discussions and lectures on social, economic, and scientific subjects.

From 1826 to 1850 most societies depended upon local celebrities—physicians, teachers, lawyers, and ministers—for their programs.[2] Among the illustrious men attempting to share their knowledge with less well-educated townsmen were Philip Hone, Lyman Beecher, Abraham Lincoln, and Francis Lieber.

Rapidly expanding railroads changed this picture in the fifties. By 1860 over 30,000 miles of track united the Atlantic seaboard economically and politically with the Old Northwest. Theatrical troupes, book agents, and lecturers filled the cars running from Boston and New York to Cleveland, Chicago, and St. Louis. This development, coupled with southern refusal to accept books and newspapers reflecting antislavery views, tended to strengthen cultural ties between New England and the Middle West.

Eastern lecturers who flooded the North and Middle West were responsible for much of this unity. Some repeated lectures previously read before eastern groups. Others, including Bayard Taylor, Park Benjamin, Ike Marvel, Horace Greeley, and George William Curtis, prepared new manuscripts for lyceums in general. Just as radio and television serve as nationalizing forces today, so did the lyceum of the fifties tend to unify northern opinion concerning morals, science, travel, history, and religion. On one key subject, however, lyceum lecturers usually remained silent. That subject was slavery.

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[1] *Old South Leaflet*, no. 139, Old South Meeting House (Boston, 1939).

[2] Cecil B. Hayes, *The American Lyceum: Its History and Contribution to Education*, U.S. Office of Education Bul., no. 12 (Washington, 1932); Herbert B. Adams, *Educational Extension in the United States: U.S. Commission of Education Reports for 1899–1900* (Washington, 1901), I, 284–289.

The lyceum in Ohio followed the national trend. An active organization was established in Cincinnati in 1830.[3] By 1850 there were 192 incorporated library associations and lyceums in the state.[4] The intensely practical citizens of Ohio welcomed lectures on chemistry, astronomy, physiology, mechanics, and travel.

Cincinnati, the state's hub of trade and industry, was likewise its lyceum center.[5] The Mechanic's Institute sponsored lectures from 1828 to 1857.[6] Other groups, notably the Literary Club, which first brought Ralph Waldo Emerson to the city in 1851, were active. The outstanding lyceum, however, was the Young Men's Mercantile Library Association. Founded by forty-nine young men in 1835, it had a membership of over three thousand by 1860.[7] Influential citizens presented lectures on varied subjects up to the early fifties. Then the directors, eager for profits in order to purchase books for their library, turned to eastern lecturers. Among those appearing on its platform were T. Starr King, Horace Greeley, Herman Melville, Parke Godwin, the Reverend E. H. Chapin, Louis Agassiz, William Thackeray, Ralph Waldo Emerson, and Edward Everett.[8] None discussed slavery.

Indeed, Cincinnati in 1860 exemplified the restriction upon antislavery discussion. The directors of the Mercantile Library Association were unusually careful in planning their series for that year. Their annual report stated: "The Board felt that it was important to exercise a discretion, which forbade them from inviting those through whose splendid diction and charming delivery the features of the artful demagogue and baneful fanatic are visible."[9]

The same attitude prevailed elsewhere. Even in Cleveland, where antislavery sentiment was strong, the lyceums avoided the discussion of abolition. As the editor of the *Ohio Farmer* said, "Usage interdicts to the Library Associations all themes religious and semi-religious."[10]

Radical abolitionists were equally unwelcome in Iowa. "The subject of slavery, a common lecture theme in the East, was avoided in a state slow to accept abolition."[11]

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[3] Charles T. Grove, *Centennial History of Cincinnati and Representative Citizens* (Chicago, 1904), I, 648–649.

[4] Edward A. Miller, "History of Educational Legislation in Ohio from 1830 to 1850," *Ohio Archeological and Historical Society Pub.*, XXVII (1919), 135.

[5] Mary W. Graham, "The Lyceum in Ohio from 1840 to 1860," unpub. diss. (Ohio State Univ., 1950), pp. 151–168, 198–228.

[6] *Thirtieth Annual Report of the Board of Directors of the Mechanics Institute, Library and Reading Room of Cincinnati from March, 1857 to March, 1858* (Cincinnati, 1858), p. 25.

[7] *Catalogue of the Young Men's Mercantile Library Association of Cincinnati* (Cincinnati, 1861), p. 18.

[8] David Mead, *Yankee Eloquence in the Middle West: The Ohio Lyceum, 1850–1870* (East Lansing, Mich., 1951).

[9] *Twenty-sixth Annual Report of the Young Men's Mercantile Library Association* (Cincinnati, 1860), pp. 13–14.

[10] Oct. 22, 1859.

In eastern cities also, many associations refused to accept agitators or those who discussed controversial subjects on the lyceum platform. When Henry Ward Beecher lectured before the Sons of New England in Philadelphia on December 22, 1860, he was forced to post bonds guaranteeing the peace before he could speak.[12] Feeling was so intense there that George William Curtis had been mobbed, and Bayard Taylor guarded, when they began to read their addresses in the same year, although neither was speaking on antislavery.[13] Both, however, were known to oppose slavery.

The lyceums in New England, on the other hand, apparently continued their usual practices in the year preceding the Civil War. If slavery had been discussed before, the lyceum permitted it to be debated again. On the whole, however, lyceums such as that in Salem, Massachusetts, stressed educational and cultural addresses in their winter's course.[14]

As noted before, the Young Men's Mercantile Library Association of Cincinnati felt quite strongly that it should not open its platform to the sectional issue. Two series of lectures were held in 1860. The winter course of eight lectures was opened by Bayard Taylor with two addresses: "Alexander Humboldt" and "Life In The Arctic Regions." Others who spoke were O. P. Baldwin, Ralph Waldo Emerson, Henry J. Raymond, W. S. Grossbeck, Carl Schurz, and Reverend E. H. Chapin.[15] Six lectures comprised the fall course. Again the emphasis was upon culture, with the retired actor, George Vandenhoff, presenting three evenings of readings from the classics, and Bayard Taylor lecturing on "Man and Climate."[16]

Little or no opposition was encountered, except in the case of Ralph Waldo Emerson. The editor of the Cincinnati *Enquirer* objected strongly to scheduling him: "This appearance upon the stand will be a possible scandal. It is but a few weeks since he declared in a speech that John Brown, the hero of the Harper's Ferry Insurrection, has made the gallows glorious like the cross. . . ."[17] Both the *Commercial* and the *Gazette* sprang to the association's defense, maintaining that a man's political views, if not introduced into his lecture, could not possibly interfere with his effectiveness. The editor of the *Gazette* wrote that the city's residents "will feel grateful for the opportunity once more to listen to the graceful language of a scholar, a poet, and a thinker."[18] Whatever the objections, they did not prevent people from crowding Smith and Nixon's Hall, where all lectures were held. Nor did they harm the association financially: profits from the two courses amounted to $370.05.

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[11] Herbert H. Hoeltje, "Notes on the History of Lecturing in Iowa, 1855–1885," *Iowa Jour. of History and Politics*, XXV (1927), 74.

[12] Cincinnati *Gazette*, Dec. 25, 1860.

[13] Marie Hansen-Taylor and Horace E. Scudder, *Life and Letters of Bayard Taylor* (Boston, 1885), I, 372–373.

[14] *Historical Sketch of the Salem Lyceum With a List of the Officers and Lectures* (Salem, Mass., 1879), pp. 58–59.

[15] *Twenty-sixth Annual Report*, p. 20.

[16] Cincinnati *Enquirer*, Dec. 8, 12, 14, 1860.

[17] Feb. 2, 1860.

In all probability, the only lyceum lecture that came even close to discussing the sectional issue was "Man and Climate," delivered by Bayard Taylor on November 20, 1860. Taylor was then the most popular lecturer in the country; known as a world traveler and associate editor of the New York *Tribune*, he completed 285 engagements between 1854 and 1857.[19] Both Ohio and Cincinnati shared this enthusiasm, as shown by his twenty addresses in the state during 1859 and his three appearances in Cincinnati in 1860.[20]

Like most other established lecturers, Taylor prepared at least one new address each season. For the winter of 1860–1861, he chose "Man and Climate" for his subject, finishing the sixty-two pages of manuscript on November 9. Differing from his earlier lectures, this paper presented no new descriptions of foreign lands, but was rather an attempt at ethnic analysis based upon materials previously employed.[21]

After a formal introduction calling attention to the difficulty of understanding foreign customs, Taylor stated his main idea: "I desire to confine myself merely to the broader distinctions, to take climate in the sense of temperature, to show what it does, and also what it cannot do." Pointing out that the Caucasian race had always inhabited the temperate zones, he went on to declare that "there is no division of the human race which could adapt itself permanently to all climates."

Taylor next proceeded to consider the tropical regions, describing the physical, moral, and intellectual qualities of the African Negro, the Malay, and the primitive Indian. This portion he ended with a short summary contrasting the three races: "Climate, it appears, is unable to efface the distinction. It cannot make the Malay black, nor the African yellow; it cannot change hair into wool, or wool into hair; it cannot give the American a musical ear, or the Malay a tender heart. What, then, are the points of common resemblance? They are alike in early maturity, unrestrained appetites, indolence, want of forethought, and the fact that they seem incapable of rising above a certain level. They have the capacity of progress, but not of indefinite progress."

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[18] Feb. 2, 1860.

[19] Richard Croom Beatty, *Bayard Taylor, Laureate of the Gilded Age* (Norman, Okla., 1936), p. 148.

[20] Mead, pp. 113–129, 263–268.

[21] Attention was first called to Taylor's lectures by Robert Warnock ("Unpublished Lectures of Bayard Taylor," *American Literature*, V [1933], 123–132). The MSS. were then in the West Chester (Pa.) Public Library; they are now in the Chester County Historical Society, West Chester. Permission to read the MSS. and to use that for "Man and Climate" was granted by the curators. Quotations following are from the MS.

After analyzing the characteristics of the inhabitants of the temperate zone, Taylor concluded that no race could compare with the Caucasian: "The Caucasian is first, both physically and morally and intellectually." Proslavery men in his audience perhaps found some comfort in this pronouncement.

In the second part of the address, Taylor attempted to show the influence of climate upon morals and customs, citing as an example the existence of polyandry in tropical zones. While Taylor believed that the Caucasian could live successfully anywhere, he maintained that he could most happily exist in the temperate climate. As if to combat the Southerners who were then urging the annexation of Cuba and Mexico, Taylor had devoted several pages to extending this argument. It was as close as he came to dealing with the raging sectional controversy.

Taylor's concluding sentences were masterful in their sentimentality. After giving his audience a world tour in his lecture, he brought it safely home again:

> Each race, fortunately, is well satisfied with its location. The conditions of human happiness do not depend upon degrees of latitude and that love of home which almost deserves to be placed in the catalogue of the Christian virtues, is equally strong at the Equator and the Pole. Among different races, the descriptions of Heaven, which represent their highest idea of bliss, are nearly always marked by some characteristics of climate. The Indian has his happy hunting-grounds and his celestial wigwams; the Russian serf his vast plain, with snow at one end and flames at the other; the Lapp his eternity of ice; the Esquimaux his submarine palace where seals are forever cooking in a large kettle; while some of the African tribes seem to be so well satisfied that their Heaven is life on Earth. In the Scandinavian mythology the warmth of fire was the principal future comfort of the good; and even the Evangelist, in describing the Christian Heaven, uses the idea of shade and coolness, which, under the Syrian scene, is emblematic of blue. "They shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more; neither shall the sun light on them, nor any heat."

As was the case with his travel lectures and biographical sketches, Taylor's organization of "Man and Climate" was exceedingly loose. Nor did his long, stilted sentences make comprehension easier. It was not such factors, however, which made Taylor so popular. Numerous and strange examples, humor, generalizations, imagery, shrewd observations, and an ability to state facts pleasantly account for much of his ability to attract crowds. And Smith and Nixon's Hall was packed when Taylor spoke on November 20. The auditorium held over 1500 people, and "every seat was filled before the hour of half-past seven arrived, although the advertised time for opening the lecture was eight." The *Gazette* devoted one column to the lecture, summarizing Taylor's main illustrations and ideas.[22] The *Enquirer* reviewer said of him: "Mr. Taylor pursued his subject through all its various ramifications at much greater length than we have space to follow. Suffice to say, that it was an intelligent resume of thought, argument, and observation, and its recital was listened to with the utmost attention of his audience. At its conclusion he was heartily applauded."[23]

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[22] Nov. 21, 1860.

Taylor was well pleased with his reception. In a letter to Richard Stoddard, on November 21, he said, "This season will be as remunerative as any other –lots of invitations, good pay, and tremendous houses, thus far."[24]

Such programs as Taylor's show how lyceums throughout the country concentrated their efforts upon educational improvement and cultural betterment. If they had done otherwise, by dealing directly with the sectional controversy, many lyceums would have perished due to dissension. By providing a place where all cultivated men might meet and discuss literature, science, and travel, the lyceum served as a unifying agency. This was evident to Carl Schurz: "The observations I made on my lecturing journeys of these years were among the most interesting and cheering of my early American experiences. I saw what I might call the middle-class culture in process of formation . . . I came into contact with many men and women who had enjoyed but little, if anything, more than an ordinary school education, but who carried into the humdrum of this daily life . . . a very earnest desire to keep pace with the progress of civilization in all its aspects . . ."[25]

The lyceum had changed from Holbrook's original idea of mutual improvement, but it still encouraged self-improvement and social unity. Though such well-known abolitionist lecturers as Greeley, Curtis, Emerson, Everett, Beecher, Schurz, and Taylor spoke from lyceum platforms in 1860, the lyceum's concern for social unity kept them silent on the sectional controversy.

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[23] Nov. 21, 1860.

[24] Taylor MSS.

[25] *Reminiscences of Carl Schurz* (New York, 1907–1909), II, 158–159.

Owen Lovejoy on "The Barbarism of Slavery," April 5, 1860

GEORGE V. BOHMAN

8

"*Sir, than* robberies, than piracy, than polygamy, slaveholding is worse—more criminal, more injurious to man, and consequently more offensive to God," proclaimed Owen Lovejoy as he warmed to the theme of a major speech in the House of Representatives in midafternoon of April 5, 1860. "Slaveholding has been justly designated as the sum of all crimes. . . . I am speaking in earnest, before God, and it is God's truth. It has the violence of robbery, the blood of piracy, the brutal lusts of polygamy all combined and concentrated in itself, with aggravations that neither one of those crimes ever knew or dreamed of."[1]

As Lovejoy talked he advanced, "as is his wont when aroused," from the Republican benches to the "area in front of the Chair."[2] "We concede as a matter of fact the inferiority of the [Negro] race, but it does not follow that it is right to enslave a man simply because he is inferior to you. Mr. Chairman, this is to me a most abhorrent doctrine. It would place the weak at the mercy of the strong. The theory is, that if a man is crippled, trip him up; if he is old and weak, strike him—he can't strike back; if he is a child, deceive him. Why, sir," stormed the preacher-congressman, stepping toward the front benches of the opposition, "this is the doctrine of Democrats—and it is the doctrine of devils as well. It would lead the strong to enslave the weak everywhere. It would justify the angels in enslaving men, and, in turn, would justify the archangels in enslaving the angels." His right arm raised high and his fist clenched, he began another step, thundering, "If carried out in the universe, it would ultimately transform Jehovah himself into an infinite Juggernaut—" Before he could add the words, "—rolling the huge wheels of his omnipotence axle deep amid the crushed and mangled bodies of men," the tall, spare, and belligerent young Roger Pryor of Virginia, often the sensitive champion of southern honor in this session, rapidly strode the few intervening paces and cried in his light tenor voice, "Keep your own side, Sir; you shall not come over here, shaking your fists in the face of gentlemen."[3]

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[1] *The New York Times*, Apr. 6, 1860, telegraphic report.

[2] New York *Tribune*, Apr. 7, 1860.

Members rushed down the aisles toward the principals, some shouting for order, others denouncing and threatening Lovejoy—the chief southern fire-eaters of the session, Barksdale of Mississippi "shouting and flourishing a heavy cane," Crawford and Dejarnette who were believed to carry firearms, and the loud Burnett and Singleton joining Pryor. From the Republican side, Farnsworth and the huge Potter of Wisconsin placed themselves between the Southerners and Lovejoy. Republicans Millward, French, Tompkins, Buffington, Beale, Kenyon, and Kellogg rushed to form a ring around the speaker. Perhaps forty members joined the "gesturing and uproarious hubbub" as S. S. Cox, Ohio Democrat, called for order.[4] For about five minutes, the timid and uncertain chairman of the Committee of the Whole, Israel Washburne of Maine, tried vainly to restore order. Members called for the Sergeant-at-Arms. Only his assistant, looking like a "jolly fat boy in Pickwick, rushed out with his hair on end and mace in hand. The eagle on it fluttered about in utter dismay. The House was all on its feet. The area was a jam of disorder, noise and belligerence."[5]

In the midst of the melee, Lovejoy stood calm and silent except for remarks reported as "I will stand where I please" and "Nobody can intimidate me."[6] Unable to restore order, Washburne recalled the Speaker to the chair and then members resumed their seats. The last to leave his position, Lovejoy was permitted to continue from the clerk's desk. For the rest of the allotted hour, he painted slavery in damning colors and hurled "imprecations" and "anathemas at the Negro Propangandists before him," while they derided and taunted him. "Slavery must die," Lovejoy pronounced in conclusion, as he forecast some new Henry or Marion who would succeed where John Brown failed. "Instead of being stimulated to revenge, Virginia ought to have learned the lesson of penitence. Instead of arraying herself in sheep's-gray, she should have put on sackcloth and ashes and ought to drink the waters of bitterness." When Martin of Virginia retorted, "And if you come into Virginia we will hang you up higher than we did John Brown," Lovejoy's benediction was, "No doubt about it." Here the gavel fell.[7]

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[3] Texts from *The New York Times* telegraphic account of Apr. 6, 1860; slightly different wording, usually more elaborate, in the *Cong. Globe*, 36th Cong., 1st Sess., App., Apr. 5, 1860; characterization of Pryor, *The New York Times*, Jan. 24, 1860.

[4] *Cong. Globe* included statements by twenty-two members during the melee. At least six others were mentioned as active participants in various reports. ". . . the area was filled with members" (New York *Herald*, Apr. 6, 1860); ". . . some forty members were in the area" (New York *Tribune*, Apr. 7, 1860). This account was specifically commended by Lovejoy (letter to unknown addressee, Apr. 9, 1860, Lovejoy MSS., Bureau Co., Ill., Historical Society): "The Tribune Saturday the 7th has a pretty accurate description of the row and that of today a good defense of it as to its timeliness. . . ." See Cox's satirical description, "Chanticleer," St. Louis *Republican*, Apr. 15, 1860, dated Washington, Apr. 7, presumably quoted from *Ohio Statesman*, an edition not discovered either at Library of Congress or Ohio Historical Society. See letter of Crawford, quoted in Allan Nevins, *The Emergence of Lincoln* (New York, 1950), II, 124: "I never said a word to anybody but quietly cocked my revolver in my pocket and took my position in the midst of the mob. . . ."

[5] Cox letter, St. Louis *Republican*, Apr. 15, 1860. The mace is given some credit for stopping the confusion in New York *Evening Post*, Apr. 7; New York *Herald*, Apr. 6; New York *Tribune*, Apr. 6; Portsmouth (N.H.) *Journal*, Apr. 14. However, *The New York Times* (Apr. 6) noted: "The Deputy Sergeant-at-Arms appeared, but was requested to stand aside, and keep out of the way. All were on their feet and apparently prepared for action; some urging on the row, others aiming to calm the storm."

[6] *The New York Times*, Apr. 6, telegraphic account, contains both. Lovejoy retained the latter statement, widely reported, in the *Cong. Globe* account. (Philadelphia *Press* correspondent's letter, Apr. 6, quoted in Peoria *Transcript*, Apr. 14, 1860.)

Next day, Lovejoy wrote his wife: "I poured on a rainstorm of fire and brimstone as hot as I could, and you know something of what that is. I believe that I never said anything more Savage in the pulpit or on the stump." Washington buzzed "like a hive of bees when struck" with the newest sensation in the conflict over slavery.[8]

According to the record of a *New York Times* correspondent, Lovejoy's philippic against slavery produced the fourteenth clash between members of the House in four months since the session began.[9] For about nine weeks, during a deadlock on the election of the Speaker of the House, the ineffectual clerk had permitted southern fire-eaters, supported by noisy, undisciplined galleries, to heap abuse and insult upon the Republicans, who chose, in the hope that silence might elect John Sherman, to keep their peace. Pryor, Keitt, McRae, Crawford, and Gartrell delivered vivid apologetics for southern culture and slavery and freely repeated threats of secession and dissolution of the Union. In clashes between Grow and Branch, Grow and Keitt, "Extra Billy" Smith and Sherman, Crawford and Thad Stevens, Wright and Stokes, Nelson and Pryor, Hickman and Pryor, and Kellogg and Burnett, fights seemed imminent.[10] Farnsworth's speech, which Stevens believed lost the last chance for Sherman to be elected, and the tantalizing, irritating decorum and parliamentary maneuvers of radical Republicans such as Israel Washburne suggested to many that the Republicans also courted physical violence. From the first days of the session, according to reports, guns were carried both in the galleries and on the floor.[11] Thus for weeks the lie was passed, motives were impugned, and duels and violence were hinted, until on January 20, after Pryor had bitterly denounced Editor James Gordon Bennett of the

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[7] *The New York Times*, Apr. 6, 1860.

[8] Owen to Eunice Lovejoy, Apr. 6, 1860 (Lovejoy MSS., Clements Library).

[9] Apr. 12, 1860.

[10] *The New York Times*, Dec. 7, 9, 23, 1859; Jan. 5, 10, 11, 12, 17, 1860. Major irritating speeches by Hickman (Dec. 12), McRae (Dec. 14), Crawford (Dec. 15), Farnsworth (Dec. 23), and Pryor (Dec. 29) proclaimed the South "the most stable basis of government and the highest development of civilization." Pennington was elected Speaker on February 11 by a coalition of Republicans and moderates.

[11] Farnsworth's speech, *The New York Times*, Dec. 24, 1859; Washburne's tactics, *ibid.*, Jan. 20, 1860; *Cong. Globe*, Dec. 7, 8, 1859, and Jan. 5, 12, 1860; Nevins, II, 121–122; Elizabeth Merritt, *John Henry Hammond* (Baltimore, 1923), p. 133. On Jan. 12, Haskin accidentally dropped a pistol on the floor of the House, but explained he would not use it except to defend himself.

New York *Herald,* a correspondent wrote that thousands stayed in the galleries all day "waiting for the evening farce, during which the hall is always a bedlam."[12]

Outside Congress in the spring of 1860, the pressure of political discussion, primarily involving the prohibition of further extension of slavery, mounted steadily. Individual speeches, such as Lincoln's at Cooper Union and Wendell Phillips' "Plea for the Dissolution of the Union"; states' rights conventions in the South; Union conventions sponsored by Whigs and other moderates; and local and state party conventions signified the beginning of a campaign year. Northern papers reported acts of southern intolerance and threats of commercial boycotts against Northerners. Apparent local southern military preparations, the recall of southern medical students from Northern colleges, and warlike speeches such as William D. Porter's commencement oration at the Citadel created the impression of a desperate, defensive South.[13]

Throughout the speakership contest and for two more months, Lovejoy had remained almost silent in the House, a "prize Durham, with a ring in his nose and a rope in the ring," as Cox saw him. "Only once, during the philippics on the Helper book and signers did he bellow."[14] Even though he guided the Homestead Bill through the House, Lovejoy only asked leave to print a speech not delivered.[15] In late March he spoke briefly for the inflammatory Blake resolution, which authorized the Judiciary Committee to inquire into the expediency of an emancipation bill.[16] Then, on March 29, Lovejoy requested recognition to speak in the Committee of the Whole, but Sherman, as majority leader, could not arrange for the speech until after the antipolygamy bill had passed, on the afternoon of April 5.[17]

"I had no particular design and did not reflect very much on the consequences," Lovejoy wrote Lydia Maria Childs. "I had not written any of [the speech] and although it was not an inspiration it was a kind of instinct. It was in me and would come out. . . ." Yet, although there is evidence of neither notes nor manuscript, clearly Lovejoy planned to utilize an hour of general debate to test whether "the country is ripe for what has been thought radical doctrines," which might be deemed "imprudent by some of the timid Republicans."[18]

Unquestionably, eight weeks of "incessant abuse" over the speakership and two months of legislation, together with the controversy over subscriptions to the Helper book, the John Brown affair, and stories of growing intolerance in the South had convinced Lovejoy that "congressional speakers, from motives of expediency" had kept the "moral issue, which underlies the whole slavery question . . . too much out of sight."[19]

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[12] *The New York Times,* Jan. 13, 1860 ff. On Jan. 18, the correspondent thought Hutchins correct in opposing night sessions because of the danger.

[13] *National Intelligencer,* Apr. 27, 1860, and various southern papers.

[14] "Chanticleer," in St. Louis *Republican,* Apr. 15, 1860.

[15] *Cong. Globe,* Mar. 6, 12, 26, 1860.

[16] *Cong. Globe,* Mar. 26. On the roll call which the South demanded, Lovejoy was one of sixty radical Republicans who voted yea. This list was widely printed in southern papers to identify the "enemies" of the South.

[17] *Cong. Globe,* Mar. 29, 1860.

[18] Lovejoy to Lydia Maria Childs, Princeton, Ill., Apr. 28, 1860; letter in possession of the author.

For other motives for the speech there is little support. S. S. Cox suggested that Lovejoy "lacked some personal persecution and abuse to make him run well at home"; yet there was little doubt concerning his renomination and reelection in 1860. Nor does evidence clearly show that Lovejoy sought a "fatal and fearful collision" either for his "personal gratification" as Cox suggested, "to create sectional animosity," or, as the New York *Herald* put it, because "the Republican leaders believe a fight on the floor would be to their advantage in the presidential campaign."[20]

With the possible exception of the aging Joshua Giddings, no congressman was recognized as better qualified than Owen Lovejoy to attack slavery with the varied intellectual, temperamental, and physical talents expected of a first-rate orator. He had attended Bowdoin College to prepare for teaching but soon joined his older brother, Elijah Parish, at Alton, Illinois, where he began a study of theology. On November 7, 1837, Elijah died at the hands of an Alton mob. Thereafter, a stern, persistent, and courageous devotion to the cause of antislavery marked both Owen's public actions and his private letters.[21] Within a few months after the *Memoir of Elijah P. Lovejoy* had been published by Owen and his brother John, the former forsook whatever plans he may have had to enter the Episcopalian ministry; after a brief service as supply minister, he undertook a pastorate lasting nearly eighteen years at the Hampshire Colony Congregational Church of Princeton, Illinois. Within four years he was vigorously preaching antislavery in and out of the church, and Princeton had become known as a center through which numerous fugitives were helped along stations of the "underground railroad."[22] Lovejoy was active in district and state antislavery societies and, with Ichabod Codding, the Unitarian minister-reformer-politician, became a leading orator of the Liberty party in Illinois. In 1844, Lovejoy was the party's candidate for Congress in northern Illinois, and he stumped the district from May through August. In 1848, he lost the party's vice-presidential nomination to Leicester King on the second ballot but again campaigned for Congress.[23]

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[19] New York *Tribune*, Apr. 9, 7; *National Anti-Slavery Standard*, Apr. 21, 1860, editorial.

[20] "Chanticleer," St. Louis *Republican*, Apr. 15; Washington *States & Union*, Apr. 9, editorial; Boston *Courier*, in *Liberator*, Apr. 27; New York *Herald*, Apr. 16, 1860. The Joliet *Signal* (Apr. 17) said there had been some danger that Swett might compete for the nomination but that Wentworth had removed the threat by supporting Swett for governor. Equally doubtful were rumors that Republicans conspired to provoke Southerners to resistance and that Lovejoy was armed as he spoke, "expected a conflict, 'and sought it.'" (Washington *States & Union*, Apr. 9; *Ill. State Register*, Apr. 21, 1860; see also Ottawa *Free Trader*, Apr. 14, 1860, leading Democratic organ in Lovejoy's district.)

[21] Lovejoy to H. G. Chapman, Alton, Dec. 9, 1837 (Boston Public Library MSS.): ". . . be assured, sir, if funds can be had, the *Press will be established*, even though a hundred lives should be lost, at least I hope that number can be found who are ready to seal their sincerity with their lives." According to legend, he knelt at Elijah's grave and swore "eternal war and vengeance upon slavery." See I. N. Arnold, "Reminiscences of the Illinois Bar Forty Years Ago," *Fergus Historical Series*, No. 14 (Chicago, 1881), pp. 138–139; H. C. Bradsby, *History of Bureau Co., Ill.* (Chicago, 1885), p. 335; and other sources.

[22] In 1843, Lovejoy was indicted in at least two cases for helping runaway slaves.

Soon after this campaign, however, Lovejoy apparently was ready to abandon extreme abolition as sought through a separate political party. By 1853, he was prominently identified with the Free Democrats of Illinois; in the late spring of 1854, with Codding and others, he helped to organize the Republican party in the state. Henceforward, while his wife managed the large farm and substitutes often supplied the pulpit, Lovejoy stumped the state in every campaign. In 1854 he was elected to the legislature. Throughout the nation, the Lovejoy name was associated with extreme antislavery views, and it was widely assumed that Owen was properly labeled an abolitionist. As a Republican, he freely admitted his hope that slavery would soon be abolished everywhere. But he refused the abolition label, which was unacceptable to the majority of anti-Nebraska Democrats and Whigs who made up the new party. At Bloomington in midsummer, 1856, Lovejoy delivered a strikingly persuasive outdoor speech to the supporters of Judge Dickey, who had bolted the Republican district convention when Lovejoy was nominated for Congress. He denied "that he had ever acted with the Garrisonian abolitionists, declaring that he had never held and did not now hold that Congress had any power over slavery in the States."[24] Such evidence shows that Lovejoy neither denied his personal opposition to slavery nor promised to refrain, like so many moderates, from bitter and direct attacks upon the institution where it existed. Opposition editors continued to call him a radical abolitionist and to claim that such extreme views dominated the Republican party.[25]

Cyrus Bryant wrote, "I will not assist to support a man [preacher] who will go into all the excitements of the day," certainly not Lovejoy, "the man who gets up riots and gets fined for assault and battery." Cyrus Bryant to [Wm. C. Bryant?], Princeton, Dec. 1, 1843 (Bryant Family MSS., Bureau Co., Ill., Historical Society). For an account of Lovejoy's activities in the Underground Railroad, see Ruth E. Haberkorn, "Owen Lovejoy in Princeton, Illinois," *Ill. St. Hist. Soc. Journal,* 36 (1943), 291–299; see also original records of the Hampshire Colony Church and its centennial history, *The First Hundred Years* (Princeton, 1931).

[23] Theodore C. Smith, *The Liberty and Free Soil Parties in the Northwest* (Cambridge, 1897), p. 62: Lovejoy "for fourteen years the leader and personification of Illinois abolition . . . zealous, persistent agitator, eloquent in speech, radical, and sometimes bitter to the point of virulence. . . ."

[24] Bloomington *Pantagraph,* July 23, 1856; see also Smith; C. A. Church, *History of the Republican Party in Illinois, 1854–1912* (Rockford, 1912). On the rump convention and Dickey's subsequent reconciliation, see Joseph Knox to Owen Lovejoy, July 29, 1856, and T. L. Dickey to Owen Lovejoy, July 30, 1856 (Bureau Co., Ill., Historical Society MSS.).

[25] In the South, with Garrison and Giddings, Lovejoy personified abolition. See Mary

By right of charter membership in the Republican party, hard work, a strong following in northern Illinois, and extraordinarily able speaking, Lovejoy maintained prestige and leadership even as the coalition broadened and the party disclaimed intent to interfere with slavery in the southern states. In 1854 he met Douglas in formal debate at Princeton. At the first national Republican convention he delivered a major speech. In the Lincoln-Douglas campaign of 1858, at Freeport and Ottawa, he spoke with great effectiveness to late-afternoon or evening crowds. Even in proslavery Macoupin County, crowds listened for two hours as he "warmed to his theme and dwelt upon the horrors of the slave system."[26] So, by 1860, Lovejoy was widely known as a radical antislavery Republican, often compared with Giddings, and considered a vehement, dynamic, and assertive stump speaker, skilled in the rough and tumble of campaigning.

During his first three years in Congress, Lovejoy had delivered two major speeches against slavery. Cox, an Ohio Democrat of superior speaking ability, called Lovejoy "the most remarkable man" in the Thirty-sixth Congress. "He never feared to antagonize any of [slavery's] adherents. He was, next to Joshua R. Giddings, the most aggressive and fully equipped of the antislavery orators. . . . He had a rugged vehemence which, if not oratory, was taken for it by those who look more to the manner than substance."[27]

Now forty-nine-years old, broad-shouldered, robust though not tall, with an impressive head, short and thick neck, full rectangular face, square jaw, high brow, and flashing eyes, Lovejoy appeared a man of "great resolution, fixedness of purpose, and indomitable will."[28] For seventeen years he had spoken outdoors, often in competition with speakers on nearby platforms. Almost all witnesses testify to his large, resonant voice, which showed no weakness in two-hour speeches filled with invective, denunciation, and colorful, inspirational emotional appeals delivered in a forceful and dynamic manner. Shortly after the speech of April 5, 1860, Cox described Lovejoy as "theatrical in arrangement, style, manner, and matter." A correspondent thought only strangers would call Lovejoy's upraised fist especially defiant,

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B. Chesnut, *Diary from Dixie*, Ben Ames Williams, ed. (Boston, 1950), p. 398: "Two Southern horrors, a black regiment and a Lovejoy!"

[26] W. H. Herndon and J. W. Weik, *Abraham Lincoln* (New York, 1892), II, 32, letter of John H. Bryant, Mar. 15, 1866; N. D. Harris, *History of Negro Servitude in Illinois* (Chicago, 1904). At Freeport, see W. A. Meese reminiscence, Sterling (Wis.) *Evening Gazette*, Feb. 4, 1913. *Proceedings of the First Three Republican National Conventions of 1856, 1860, and 1864* (Minneapolis [1893]), p. 29.

[27] S. S. Cox, *Three Decades of Federal Legislation, 1855–1885* (Providence, 1885), p. 75. In this Congress other prominent Republican speakers were Corwin, Morrill, Roscoe Conkling, Thaddeus Stevens, Jerusha Grow, John Sherman, Bingham, and Colfax; for the moderates, the aging Nelson of Tennessee; and among the southern Democrats, Lamar, Pryor, Vance, Keitt, Branch, and Gilmer.

[28] Peoria *Transcript*, Apr. 14, 1860, quoting the Philadelphia *Press*. A Brady photograph in the Meserve Collection supports this description; see also *American Phrenological Jour.*, Aug., 1862.

for he used the gesture "as naturally as some men continually slap one open palm with the other."[29]

Returning now to the scene in the House on April 5, after the Pryor interruption and riot, as Lovejoy resumed speaking he "pulled off his cravat, while he hurled anathemas . . . with such vigor that it caused the perspiration to gush from his brow. . . ." As he recalled his brother, murdered by slavery sympathizers, he raised his voice "till it rang through the hall and reverberat[ed] along the adjacent passages."[30] "Unquestionably," wrote a Philadelphia correspondent, "a most forcible and fearless orator. . . . While speaking, he reminded me of Alexander, Dimitry. . . . There was a defiance and a scorn in his manner and in his language. . . ." When the riot subsided, Lovejoy finished his remarks from the elevated clerk's desk, "abating in nothing—temper of manner or of language, the spirit which marked his beginning. The scene reminded me of some of the descriptions we had heard of the French Assembly during the Revolution of 1793. Lovejoy looked like a revolutionist and his fiery declamation, his impetuous rhetoric and his ringing voice proved him to be the possessor of many of the elements of a public speaker, so peculiar to the leaders of the mountain party during the reign of terror."[31]

On April 5 at least three telegraphic reports offered newspapers from a paragraph to about 2100 words of Lovejoy's speech.[32] Not until April 11 did the text appear in the *Congressional Globe*. Three days earlier, Lovejoy had written, "I have been revising my speech yesterday & to day & am very tired & not very well." Next day, he uttered misgivings because the speech had made "quite a sensation through the country" but he feared the text might "not sustain the reputation which precedes it."[33] Whatever Lovejoy's fears, ten of the fifty-five major papers studied used the full text.[34] As revised in the *Globe*, the text comprised slightly more than 800 words preceding the riot, which reporters estimated as taking five minutes, and about 6500 words more after Lovejoy resumed, making a total of about 7300 words, or about the hour customarily allotted to speakers in the Committee of the Whole.[35]

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[29] "Chanticleer," St. Louis *Republican*, Apr. 15; "Avon," *National Anti-Slavery Standard*, Apr. 14, 1860.

[30] New York *Tribune*, Apr. 7, a description which Lovejoy approved.

[31] Peoria *Transcript*, Apr. 14, from Philadelphia *Press* dispatch of Apr. 6, 1860.

[32] (1) *The New York Times*, Apr. 6, 1860, and most Republican papers; by "National Printing Line." (2) *Triweekly National Intelligencer*, Apr. 7; Providence *Journal*, Apr. 6, 1860, and several northern Democratic papers; "By American Printing Line, 9 Wash Row." Only seven lines on the riot. Omitted names, but accurately stated principal topics, quotations, and illustrations. Indicated no interruptions, thereby presenting an extreme speech with a mild southern reaction. (3) A brief paragraph referring to the "scene of great confusion" and Lovejoy "vehemently indulging in his favorite pastime of abuse and defamation of the Democracy, carrying his person even into the camp of the enemy." Ascribed in Providence *Daily Post*, Apr. 6, to "House Printing Line, 9 Wash. Bldg." Slightly amplified in "TAU" wire to Charleston *Courier*, Apr. 9, 1860.

These three reports constitute the basic coverage of all but a half dozen papers in Washington; New York; Boston; Concord, N.H.; Portsmouth, N.H.; Springfield, Mass.; Providence; Pawtucket; Albany; Trenton; Newark; Philadelphia; Baltimore; Cleveland; Columbus, O.; Detroit; Chicago; Springfield, Ill.; Bloomington; Peoria; St. Louis; San Francisco; Mobile; New Orleans; Louisville; Nashville; Memphis; Frankfort; Jackson; Charleston; Charlotte; Greensboro; Wilmington; and Richmond. Longer stories in the South were carried by papers in Louisville, Jackson, Charlotte, Wilmington, Richmond, and Charleston.

In the first part of the speech, two important additions clarified the analysis. The first was: "And, by the way, I hold that the extreme men, as they are called, on this question, are the only men who have the logic of it." In the other, the speaker changed "Stagyrite of Ohio," widely interpreted to mean Corwin, to read: "stagyrite of Greece . . . reaffirmed and re-established by the chanticleer Solon of Ohio," which clearly identified S. S. Cox.[36] Most changes in the revision seem to make for smoother reading, if not better speaking. For example, Lovejoy weakened the dynamic parallelism a minute before the riot: "If a man is a cripple, trip him up; if he is old and weak, and bowed down with the weight of years, strike him, for he cannot strike back; if idiotic, take advantage of him; and if a child, deceive him." The changes broke the fine rhythm.

The speech was organized in a classic pattern, with an introductory analysis, statement, refutation of three justifications offered for slavery, four principal topics of argument, and a concluding appeal to the South to emancipate its slaves before slavery melted away like an iceberg in the tropics or slave uprisings fulfilled Jefferson's prophecy. In the four arguments, Lovejoy held slavery up to universal reprobation, recommended the circulation of the Helper book as a vindication of the rights of free speech and free press, praised John Brown while condemning his acts, and denied that the Caliban of slaveholding had any rights. Each point was supported by examples, illustrations, and analogies, with only occasional formal logical demonstration. Clear partial summaries usually preceded the transitions, and restatement and reiteration were frequently employed, as if to leave no doubt whatever of the meaning. The closeness with which the revised text followed the outline of both major telegraphic reports seems to indicate that the speech as delivered was nearly as well unified and coherent as the revision.

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[33] *Cong. Globe*, App., Apr. 5, pp. 203–207; referred to in the Potter-Pryor controversy on the floor, Apr. 11. In 1860, *Globe* reporters worked on the floor, transcribed, and evidently offered their notes to speakers for correction and addition before printing. Potter and Pryor described in detail the changes made in their parts in the riot (*Globe*, Apr. 11). Regarding reporting for the *Globe* and the press, see *The New York Times*, Jan. 11, 1860. How much of the wire reports were drawn from the official reporters, especially when actual words during a riot may have been inaudible in the press gallery, is problematical.

[34] *The New York Times* and New York *Post*, Apr. 14; New York *Herald* and Chicago *Press & Tribune*, Apr. 16; Peoria *Transcript* and Charleston *Mercury*, Apr. 17; *Ill. State Journal*, Apr. 19; *Liberator*, Apr. 20; New York *Anti-Slavery Standard*, Apr. 28, 1860. Also Galesburg *Democrat*, Apr. 20; Bureau Co. (Ill.) *Republican*, Apr. 19; Sanilac (Lexington, Mich.) *Republican*, May 5, 1860, indicating considerable use by country weeklies. Several papers advertised extra copies for sale and the Peoria *Transcript* and New York *Tribune* may have printed it separately as it was in Washington (Buell & Blanchard, 8vo., 8 pp.). *New Yorker Demokrat* produced a German translation. See *Anti-Slavery Standard*, Apr. 28, 1860. Only the Washington edition appears in Sabin.

[35] Lovejoy asked for additional time, but Singleton objected.

[36] *Ohio Statesman*, Apr. 17, "Chanticleer" letter of Apr. 11, 1860. Cox noted that Corwin had uttered similar sentiments.

Although Lovejoy did not repeat the patterns of two previous major congressional speeches on the same theme, it is true that all three speeches utilized religious and constitutional arguments and relied heavily upon the theory of the natural rights of man. The 1860 speech contained the least formal argument on the principle of slavery. Rather, it briefly summarized the arguments and then, with vivid illustrations and analogies, loaded words, neatly slanted suggestion and *reductio ad absurdum*, denounced slavery, to the delight of its opponents, before it brought the audience to a bluntly direct appeal to the states to emancipate their slaves. Neither the long peroration of the 1858 speech that "slavery lies across our country's destiny and glory" nor the melodramatic personal proclamation that Lovejoy helped fugitives marked this one. Yet, there was the same eagerness to accept challenges on the Helper book subscription and aid to fugitives. The effect of slavery on the family and on Christianity in the South received more space than in 1858 and was supported by a somber satire on the funeral of a tortured slave instead of the amusing wedding of a bureau and a chest of drawers used in the 1859 speech. Both southern taunts and mention of the Helper subscription gave Lovejoy opportunity to carry the topics of free speech and free press beyond his previous use of the doctrine of natural rights, constitutional provisions, and denunciation of *vox populi, vox Dei* into an analysis of current examples of southern intolerance. Otherwise, only a few metaphors, similes, Biblical terms, and the wolf analogy were repeated from the earlier speeches.

When the speech is read today, the vigor of the procession of ideas, examples, illustrations, and analogies, and the strength of the loaded words are as striking as the painstaking clarity of organization. The Bible, classic literature, and American history furnished most names, labels, and figurative language; a few coinages such as "superannuated old mummy of a Judge—and a Jesuit at that" and "Gov. Fuss-ation" appear to be Lovejoy's own.[37] The speech was fairly rich in allusions and quotations, many of which were not identified by the speaker but used as if they were familiar materials of conversation.[38] In at least five places, the speech showed Lovejoy's familiarity with the Helper book and its sources.[39] Although not all examples of southern intolerance and mistreatment of slaves which Lovejoy instanced in the speech have been traced, the northern press cited cases such as Lovejoy used.

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[37] Note "Stagyrite," "Lupine chorus of the Alps," the "Moloch of Slavery," "Old Ossawatomie," "Caliban," "Freedom the Isaac, Slavery the Hagar and Ishmael," and "Some Marion . . . some Henry." See Hinton Helper, *The Impending Crisis*, p. 200, for similar use of "Henry." The "superannuated old mummy" was Chief Justice Taney, 82 and a Catholic. "Fuss-ation" was Governor Wise of Virginia, whose excited behavior marked the John Brown affair.

[38] Examples: Wordsworth's *Ecclesiastical Sonnet*, Part II; a portion of Webster's

The richest resources employed by Lovejoy, however, were extended illustrations and analogies, at least seven of which ranged from one to five hundred words each. The longest portrayed a bride so obsessed with a growing mole or wart that she demanded it be transferred to each of her children, whereupon her husband declared that he married her despite the defect (slavery) and would protect her children (the territories) from its spread. In other analogies, Lovejoy compared John Brown with a wounded lion, the exercise of free speech in Britain with the South, Paul's rights as a Roman citizen with American rights, the slave mother and child with a birdling and its mother, and an iceberg floating in tropical waters with the ultimate fate of slavery. Generally, his analogies and illustrations were extremely selective as to details, simple in language, and unfailingly pointed toward his purpose. Together they make up almost one-fourth of the text. Since much of the speech was essentially refutation, several analogies were employed to turn the tables or pursue argument *ad absurdum*.

For analysis and rapid transitions, Lovejoy habitually asked questions. All told, some thirty-four appeared in the revised text.

Tersely direct, simple declarations which repeated strong words also contributed to the vividness and blunt vigor of the text, as, for example, the passage: "You say this is horrid. I know it is horrid. I know that it is horrid to hold men in slavery." Often the speaker would amplify and reiterate in successively more complex sentences. To the southern challenge to Helper subscribers he replied, "Mr. Chairman, I for one, signed the paper . . . I signed it intelligently. I was neither engrossed nor abstracted. I did it because I wanted to; and now, if the gentleman wants to look upon that kind of a traitor, *me, me, adsum qui feci, in me convertite telum;* I did it. I will sign a recommendation for the circulation of any book that I choose, without

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speech on Kossuth; references to the Bible, Koran, Young's *Night Thoughts*, Tom Moore's *Anacreon*, Jonathan Edwards on the *Decrees*, and Paine's *Age of Reason*. Also, Latin quotations: "The blood of the martyrs is the seed of the church," Tertullian, *Apologetics*, 50; "Carthago est delenda," Plutarch, *Lives*, 431; "Me, me adsum qui feci, in me convertite telum," *Aeneid*, IX; and an unidentified "Pro nullis, pro mortuis, pro quadrupedis."

[39] These were (1) "blasting, withering curse," a paraphrase of C. J. Faulkner, quoted in Helper, p. 399; (2) "the little finger of American slavery was thicker than the loins of British despotism" (see Helper, p. 254), from a contemporary German; (3) slavery "not an institution," but "simply a practice" (Helper, p. 268), from Rev. Dr. Fr. Wayland, *Elements of Moral Science;* (4) limited freedom of speech and press in the South (Helper pp. 409–410); and (5) Jefferson's prediction of a slave insurrection (Helper pp. 195–198), from Jefferson's *Notes on Virginia.*

The familiar Republican argument that the Constitution neither expressed nor implied the idea of slavery seemed newly phrased in Lovejoy's 1860 speech, that the "framers so deliberately worded it." This appears to show influence from Lincoln's recent Cooper Union speech, in which he said, "This mode of alluding to slavery . . . was employed on purpose."

asking the permission of the gentleman from Missouri, or of any other gentleman in the House or out of the House. I will sign a paper recommending the circulation of the Bible, or the Koran . . ."

Lovejoy demonstrated considerable skill with humor, usually pointed with irony or sarcasm, such as the extravagant tribute to Cox's rhetoric of "gorgeous colors, like the hues which gather around the clouds of a Summer sunset."[40] Later, he described the "discolored whelks of sanctification being raised between the teeth" of the broad side of a hand saw by a Presbyterian elder, "every time this Gospel agency fell upon the naked and quivering flesh of the tortured convert." His concluding comment upon John Smith's escape from slavery to Virginia was: "Oh, for a South-side preacher to admonish John to stay and serve his master, whose money he was, like a good 'Christian dog!'" With a surprising change of mood, he began the peroration, "I want to give you a little advice. I love you all," and then, in the midst of the succeeding iceberg analogy, he portrayed slaveholders riding the melting ice, threatening Jehovah that, unless he stopped the sun and the rain, they would crumble his universe "from tur-r-et to foundation stone." After "great laughter" he asked, "Do you not think God would feel bad; and would not the archangels tremble at the chivalry?"

In the 1859 speech, Lovejoy promised to return a "Roland for an Oliver" till "this tomfoolery ends." With the same cockiness of spirit, he wrote a friend, "I can't refrain from laughing every time I think how they squirmed under the lava. Wilson says they acted like a turkey standing on a hot grate, which keeps stepping to prevent burning its toes. The last half I enjoyed as I got them under my control." Yet, during the long "half" after the riot, sixteen interruptions by Democrats were recorded. Taunts by Martin, Barksdale, Miles, and Bonham were used to exemplify southern intolerance. When a member charged, "You steal" fugitives, Lovejoy retorted, "Who steals, when a man comes and takes my child from my hearthstone?" and added the analogy of the lamb snatched from the jaws of a wolf. The best repartee, however, came at the start of the peroration. To Lovejoy's, "I love you all," McQueen replied, "I utterly repudiate your love." Lovejoy remarked, "Sinners did that of Christ; but he loved them still." McQueen persisted: "I do not think he loves you very much." At once, Lovejoy capitalized on the seriousness of McQueen: "I am afraid that I am not very much like him. He went, however, and preached to the spirits in prison; and I think I never approximated so nearly to him as in this regard, while making proclamation of the holy evangel to sinners in this House. I tell you of the slave States that you must emancipate your slaves."

Despite avowals that he intended no personal insults, Lovejoy's mood of self-righteousness and his technical skill with repartee, name-calling, suggestion, irony, and sarcasm irritated both extreme Southerners and moderates who hoped for a soberer discussion or none at all. The casual coupling of devils and Democrats and the five points of hell with the Democratic party occurred just before the riot. So obviously an afterthought was his inclusion of southern with northern women among those who saved the South from barbarism that Singleton closely questioned the speaker to detect a slur upon southern womanhood. Singleton objected to giving more time to "such a mean, despicable wretch as that," whereat Lovejoy smugly commented: "When the Jews could not do anything else, they spit upon Christ and said he was possessed of a devil." In the conclusion, he chided the South for abusive language, "because brave men are always calm and self-possessed," and added, "God feels no anger, for he knows no fear."

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[40] *The New York Times,* Apr. 6, 1860.

To describe only the special techniques would seem to justify the criticisms of both moderates and Southerners that the whole speech was "intemperate, injudicious, and extravagant" and "in bad taste and spirit."[41] Lovejoy himself claimed that he had condemned slaveholding "with as severe terms of reprobation" as he could muster. The opposition was clearly identified, at times ridiculed, but its behavior and its views were denounced with little effort to conciliate. Only upon the strongly stated premises of the speaker was even reformation acceptable. The three formal points of refutation were obviously for the record with northern readers. The Helper book and the right of free speech and press were argued in more defiant than appealing phraseology.[42] John Brown's actions were condemned but his spirit praised. "Despotism seldom sacrificed three nobler victims," cried the orator. Unrelentingly, he held the extreme position that there was no right to make a slave and no harm in helping a fugitive. "The country belongs to freedom." Such appeals were hardly calculated to drive slavery's apologists from their position. Probably there was no expectation of such a victory, for the extreme southern stand had already been elaborated on each of the major issues within the past twelve weeks. However, the peroration used a quite different appeal, both in its emphasis upon the threat of a slave insurrection and its suggestion of a gradual emancipation. Was it this combination of threat with willingness to await an inevitable emancipation that caused Editor Rhett, more than the influence of earlier dogmatic arguments and appeals, to publish the full text in the *Mercury*, with an injunction to his readers to read every word and then "put it away in a pigeon-hole for perusal"?[43]

The principal questions raised by a survey of reactions to the speech would first involve the immediate audience of the House and its galleries. What brought on the riot? Lovejoy's argument was strongly worded. His mood was defiant. He moved, as he spoke, nearer the seats of the opposition. Tempers were frayed by weeks of delay on the speakership and by numerous vehement speeches arousing threats and near-violence. Lovejoy's speech was what was expected of him. Did not the galleries also expect a demonstration by the Southerners? To what extent was the riot a play in roles demanded by the political relations already existing between the principal protagonists?

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[41] Boston *Journal*, Apr. 18, 1860, editorial, "Cui Bono?"

[42] For the effectiveness with which antislavery men had identified their cause with civil rights and thereby broadened their support in the North, see Russel B. Nye, *Fettered Freedom* (East Lansing, Mich., 1949).

[43] Charleston *Mercury*, Apr. 17, 1860. Did Rhett thereby violate South Carolina law against publishing antislavery literature or his readers transgress by possessing it? See Nye, p. 124.

After the day's session, Republicans claimed that Pryor and others sought to waylay the speaker, either to offer a formal challenge, beat him up, or assassinate him. Following a meeting of Democrats that evening, newsmen reported rumors that "Extra Billy" Smith would introduce a resolution to expel the Illinoisan from the House.[44] Six days later, when the *Globe* version of the text appeared, the slender Pryor openly challenged the huge Potter of Wisconsin on the floor over erasures and additions to the official reporters' version of remarks during the riot. In widely reprinted letters, Potter's seconds demanded and received the choice of weapons. Potter named bowie knives in a bare room, whereupon Pryor refused the duel and Republicans ridiculed the champion of southern chivalry for showing a white feather.[45] In the House, Hardeman of Georgia, the next Southerner to take the floor, professed not to reply to Lovejoy. He pointed out that Lamar and Vance had already amply discussed the moral issues. Therefore, he proceeded with the constitutional arguments, only casually remarking that fanatical speeches endangered the Union and sarcastically commending the "unfortunate member" to Jesus, who had removed the unclean spirits from one "similarly affected."[46]

Previously, a distinction was noted between newspaper comments prior to and after release of the revised full text. At first, Republican writers generally condemned the "Southern ruffians" who interrupted the speech. "Freedom of speech," trumpeted the Peoria *Transcript*, "has thus been promptly and nobly maintained in our National capital."[47] Lovejoy's poise and quiet disdain of the Southerners were praised. Even moderates acknowledged the motivation of his brother's martyrdom. But the fear of being called abolitionist caused some Republican editors to avoid praise of the speech itself, though they chuckled that he "made the Galled Jades wince," "stirred up the animals," and poured coals of fire upon the back of the "slow turtle of slavery."[48] In New England conservative Republican editors especially feared that the speech would weaken Republicanism there and later reading of the full text strengthened their view that it was a politically unwise speech.[49]

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[44] *Press & Tribune,* in Peoria *Transcript,* Apr. 12, 1860; New York *Herald* (Apr. 12) Washington letter of Apr. 6 suggested that fire-eaters watched for a chance to thrash Lovejoy but he had been warned, so only a philippic in the House would result. *The New York Times* (Apr. 14) noted that friends kept a constant watch on Lovejoy. See also, *Times,* Apr. 7; Owen Lovejoy to Lucy, Apr. 8; *Press & Tribune,* Apr. 14, "Waldo."

[45] *Cong. Globe,* Apr. 11, and most northern and southern papers of the next two weeks, with details of the incident, including the history of Col. Bowie and his knife and the Pennsylvania member's pun: "Vel, Mr. Speaker, Mr. Pryor hash gone to pe ash clay in te hands of te Potter." See the Portsmouth *Journal,* Apr. 28, 1860.

[46] *Cong. Globe,* App., Apr. 12, 1860, p. 221. On the same day Henry Dawes of Massachusetts delivered another strong antislavery speech. Moderate newspapers in New England condemned both Lovejoy and Dawes as abolitionist demagogues unfit for reelection. (Pawtucket *Gazette & Chronicle,* Apr. 20.)

[47] W. C. Bryant's New York *Post,* Apr. 7, 1860: "The instincts of ruffianism are the same everywhere, whether displayed by the Bowery Boy and Dead Rabbit of New York, or the Southern Congressmen of the fire-eating school." Cleveland *Herald,* in Detroit *Daily Advertiser,* Apr. 9; Bloomington *Pantagraph,* May 4; Peoria *Transcript,* Apr. 16; New York *Commercial Advertiser,* in *Bureau County Republican,* Apr. 12.

From brief early reports, northern Democratic papers and such notable southern organs as the Richmond *Enquirer*, Charleston *Mercury*, and Mobile *Advertiser* deplored both the "childish," "undignified" Southerners and Lovejoy's "grossness of language." "Neither side earned laurels to be proud of." Although S. S. Cox described the scene as one for a Hogarth, "full of grotesque comicality," yet he saw a serious side, for the House adjourned with "more bad feeling than I ever saw." Bennett's New York *Herald* called Lovejoy a demagogue and Pryor a poor white. The Richmond *Enquirer* lamented that "the retort courteous has been banished, and members stigmatize each other as liars, thieves, and perjurers."[50] Beyond this, Democratic strategy varied. Several southern and proadministration organs minimized the fracas and omitted mention of later southern interruptions. The name-calling and supposedly defiant manner of Lovejoy were emphasized. The *States & Union* claimed that the Republicans around Lovejoy "would have been scattered by a firecracker." The Lancaster *Ledger* excused the riot on grounds that the "South could not be expected to sit quietly" when attacked.[51]

After the full text of the speech became available, the Republican Peoria *Transcript* commented, "His language is forcible but not new."[52] But only

[48] New York *Tribune*, Apr. 14, 1860; New York *Post*, in Galesburg *Democrat*, Apr. 20 and elsewhere; *Illinois State Journal*, Apr. 19, 21; Bloomington *Pantagraph*, v.d. in April; Chicago *Journal*, in *Bureau County Republican*, Apr. 12; New York *Tribune*, Apr. 6; Boston *Bee & Atlas*, in Boston *Liberator*, Apr. 13.

[49] Providence *Daily Post*, Apr. 11, 1860; Boston *Journal*, Apr. 18—the widely reprinted "Cui Bono?"; Detroit Daily *Tribune*, Apr. 7; and St. Anthony (Minn.) *Weekly Express*, Apr. 28.

[50] Richmond *Enquirer*, in Yorkville (S.C.) *Enquirer*, Apr. 19, 1860; Charleston *Mercury*, Apr. 11; Mobile *Daily Advertiser*, Apr. 12; "Chanticleer" in St. Louis *Republican*, Apr. 15; *Illinois State Register*, Apr. 20; Boston *Courier*, in Boston *Liberator*, Apr. 27; New York *Herald*, Apr. 18 ff; Pawtucket *Gazette & Chronicle*, Apr. 13; Philadelphia *Public Ledger*, Apr. 11; Boston *Post*, in Boston *Liberator*, Apr. 13. The *Morning Pennsylvanian* (Apr. 17) said, "There are too many braggarts and bullies in Congress who waste valuable time in interminable wars of words and threats." Also note the concern of the Sacramento *Daily Union* (Apr. 26) that while "ultra Republicans" fought "ultra Democrats" little would be done on such problems as the Western railroad.

[51] Memphis *Avalanche*, Apr. 10, 1860; Nashville *Union & American*, Apr. 10; Washington *Constitution*, Apr. 20; Washington *States & Union*, Apr. 9. The speech was often condemned without quotations from it (Lancaster *Ledger*, Apr. 18). One wonders what Brownlow's reaction in the Knoxville *Whig* would have been if he had not been preoccupied with the murder trial of his son in Virginia.

[52] Apr. 20, 1860.

a few militant Republican editors paid the speech itself high compliments. "Abundantly ultra," cried the *Tribune*. "Certainly Mr. Lovejoy's greatest effort," wrote "Peoria." "No man but Lovejoy can deliver such a speech." The *Tribune* called the speech "most truly conservative" and noted that it asked "no harsh measures." Greeley seized upon it for Republican campaign propaganda and announced a large printing.[53] Various northern Democrat newspapers argued that the speech proved that abolitionism was now the doctrine of Republicans. The *True American* reasoned that if, as Lovejoy said, "Slavery exists nowhere by law," it is "but natural to infer that the 'Republican' party would not, if it had the power, hesitate to abolish slavery in the South."[54] In Lovejoy's congressional district, however, the Democratic Ottawa *Free Trader*, although agreeing that the speaker was abolitionist, recognized that he "of all men is least uneasy about the effect of his ravings in Congress in his district at home."[55]

Among the southern papers examined, Rhett alone used the full text, description, and editorial comment. He concluded that a fight on the floor was not unacceptable to Lovejoy and his friends and saw a deeper wedge being driven between North and South. The Louisville *Courier* believed that Republicans were "almost openly conspiring against the peace of the Union" and "planning to cripple the South." The Washington *Constitution* asked why the *Tribune* planned to scatter two million copies of the speech "if not to wage a fierce and unrelenting warfare upon the condition of society existing" in the South. Of Seward's statements, the Blake resolution, and Lovejoy's speech, the editor wrote, "Every now and then some reckless zealot rushes blindly forward and discloses the actual scope of their traitorous designs." The *States and Union* claimed that the sermons of Beecher and Parker, the oration of Phillips, the pages of Spooner and Helper, the speeches of Sumner and Lovejoy were efforts to create sectional animosity. The Richmond *Enquirer*'s "Creole" wrote gloomily from the capital about the future of the South in view of the number of abolitionist congressmen, the disproportionate eight million Southerners against eighteen million Northerners, and Hickman's recent threat that the North would overrun the South.[56]

[53] New York *Tribune*, Apr. 7, 1860; *Bureau County Republican*, Apr. 12; Peoria *Transcript*, Apr. 14; New York *Tribune*, Apr. 9.

[54] *Illinois State Register*, Apr. 20, 1860; Trenton *True American*, Apr. 16; New York *Herald*, Apr. 16; Joliet *Signal*, Apr. 17; Newark *Evening Post*, Apr. 7. The *Bureau County Democrat* (Apr. 17) avoided criticism of the speech to launch a personal attack upon its fellow townsman's supposed mismanagement of Mrs. E. P. Lovejoy's finances.

[55] Apr. 14, 1860. The editor shrewdly predicted the district convention would not endorse the speech because of its abolitionism but would praise the "courageous, manly, &., &., course of our distinguished representative" and renominate him.

[56] Charleston *Mercury*, Apr. 10, 17, 1860; Louisville *Courier*, Apr. 6; Washington *Constitution*, Apr. 10, 20; Washington *States & Union*, Apr. 19; Richmond *Enquirer*, Apr. 9. Except for some local political debates in North Carolina and space which editors took to attack Douglas, more bitter attacks on Lovejoy and gloomier comments might have appeared; for example, Memphis *Avalanche*, beginning Apr. 9.

Nowhere among the papers examined was so specific an attack made on the speech itself as in the Boston *Courier*, whose editor wrote:

> Reading his speech is like sitting through a play which is so bitter bad that the desire to yawn and the desire to hiss keep up an "irrepressible conflict" in the muscles of one's face. The staple consists of dreary . . . trash—the inane commonplaces—the obvious moral truisms—the sentimental half-truths—which form the basis of pretty much every anti-slavery speech that it was ever our bad fortune to read; embellished in fustian declamation and tawdry rhetoric. . . . There is in the whole speech no sign of the statesman; no recognition of the essential differences of the question; no intimation of any practical solution of the tremendous problems involved in the subject of slavery; there is no knowledge, no grasp, no thoughtfulness; it is, in short, from beginning to end, an eructation of bad manners, bad taste, and bad temper.[57]

Too generally, editorial evaluations were based upon previous judgments of Lovejoy and Republican goals. Hence space in print was used primarily to further the propaganda of the faction supported by each paper. Apparently the extreme positions of the most radical Republicans and the southern Democrats permitted no serious consideration of Lovejoy's proposal for slow emancipation under state supervision. The proposal came too late in the South, where emancipation in any form was identified with treason and heresy. Much of the Republican coalition, on the other hand, was uneasy about the abolitionist label which the radicals brought to the party. If the party officially would refuse to discuss what to do about existing slavery, victory was possible in 1860. Hence, the comparative reasonableness of the emancipation proposal was of little political value to any faction.

The weakness in the reasoning and strategy of the moderates, who wished to avoid the discussion of slavery itself, had already been exposed in the Trenton *Gazette & Republican* before the Boston *Journal* published "Cui Bono?": "Nothing is to be gained by evading the great issue of slavery in the territories for the decision depends on whether slavery is a great blessing or a great evil. Lovejoy's speech puts the subject in its true light."[58] The Peoria *Transcript* was more explicit: "Let us have, then the Lovejoys to stir up the public mind, and the Sewards and Lincolns, the Grows and Fessendens, and hundreds of others to come after with the arguments and facts to give determination to that mind. Let the Democrats enter the field likewise; let both sides be discussed, fully and thoroughly, and then let the people weigh and decide. Unlike the Democracy, the Republicans promise not to threaten destruction of the Union in case the decision should be against them."[59] But such a debate was not to be.

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[57] In Boston *Liberator*, Apr. 27, 1860. The *Illinois State Register* (Apr. 20) also noted Lovejoy's failure to sponsor an antislavery bill although, of course, he favored Blake's resolution, which might have led to an emancipation bill.

[58] Apr. 11, 1860.

[59] Apr. 20, 1860.

With others in the North and South, Lovejoy may have recognized that frank debate on slavery would lead to wider separation of the sections and possibly to disunion and armed conflict. Either he might have limited his argument to the general Republican position that slavery ought not be extended in the territories, or he might have refrained from speaking on the assumption of many fearful moderates that the Union ought to be held together even at the cost of sacrificing both the principles of free discussion and sincere convictions about slavery. However, during the session several southern extremists had taken advantage of the unwillingness of some Northerners to provoke conflict by positive southern demands for federal guarantees of the future of slavery. As threats of secession were added to the demands, the alternatives appeared to be either to grant most of the South's demands or to let the Union disintegrate. With compromise on the principle of slavery Lovejoy had no sympathy. Even if the North and South were further separated in the process, he seemed willing to risk a strong speech to test whether northern sentiment was hardening against southern demands. Further than this he probably had little design. Near-riots and confusion had become familiar events in the House and all leaders apparently recognized some danger of violence.

The experience of fighting slavery in the pulpit, on the stump, and in Congress for over twenty years, had made Lovejoy courageous and fearless against opposition. He was exceptionally well equipped in voice, physique, and language, as well as by familiarity with the resources pertinent to his theme. His ethical position was well established and peculiarly supported by the martyrdom of his brother, so that the strongest language against slavery was expected of him. Logically, his insistence upon speaking his views fully, despite opposition, was consistent with his speaking habits and reputation of a quarter century.[60] Unless an air of cockiness—or sometimes smugness—which appears in retorts to southern interruptions is weighted heavily, how can Lovejoy be seriously and adversely criticized without questioning his right to present his convictions as effectively as he was able? If his right to speak thus is not questioned, was he justified in taking a calculated risk for political advantage to his cause?

Personally, Lovejoy gained notoriety and possibly enhanced his reputation as an orator of vigor and power. The Republican party made the completion of the speech, despite interruptions and the riot, a victory for free speech, thus reinforcing the significance of the civil rights issue between North and South. To the extent that the riot increased the number who read the speech, perhaps more Republicans thought about the general principle of slavery and its relation to all freedoms. In this indirect way, the speech may have been more than a strategic success in which the Republicans resumed the offensive in Congress. In retrospect, the speech seems to have cast a deepening shadow over the presidential campaign, for extreme Republicans now joined extreme Southerners in candid speeches which so far disregarded the danger to the Union that efforts at compromise appeared less hopeful of success and the danger of disunion greater.

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[60] In Princeton, Ill., tradition tells of a threat against his life if he again preached against slavery, but the man, who is supposed to have come armed, sat through the sermon without shooting.

Ford Douglass' Fourth of July Oration, 1860

ORVILLE A. HITCHCOCK and OTA THOMAS REYNOLDS

9

The Occasion

No national holiday commemorated an event whose significance could be more advantageously linked to the goals of the abolitionists, albeit negatively, than the Fourth of July. It offered an opportunity to proclaim that the ideals of freedom set forth in the Declaration were, as yet, but a travesty in the United States, and that liberty for the individual was far greater under the English than the American flag. In 1860, as in other years, the Fourth was one of the big dates on the abolitionist calendar. The *Liberator* and *National Anti-Slavery Standard* carried identical announcements of the day's celebration, clearly indicating its character and purpose:

> The Insurrection of 1776!
>
> The Eighty-fifth[1] Anniversary of this great American triumph will be celebrated by a grand MASS MEETING in the handsome and commodious Grove in Framingham on Wednesday, July 4th. Turning with abhorrence from the mockery of commemorating the achievements of Freedom by servility to slavery, let all who hate despotism in the garb of democracy and republicanism as well as of Monarchy, and would overthrow it by every weapon that may be legitimately wielded against it, assemble to consider the solemn and pregnant issues of the hour—how we may best preserve the principles of the Revolution and carry them forward to a speedy and enduring triumph. . . .[2]

The Massachusetts "chapter" of the National Anti-Slavery Society sponsored the event and elaborate arrangements were made for it. Transportation, refreshments, entertainment, and inclement weather were all anticipated in the plans for the day. Special trains were run to the meeting from towns within a twenty-five-mile radius. Adults from Boston, Worcester, and Millbury could purchase a round-trip ticket for seventy-five cents; children paid only thirty-five cents. From nearer towns the fares were proportionately lower. The train fare included admission to the Grove, for which adults and children who did not come by train were taxed ten and five cents respectively. The "House" at the Grove was to be open for refreshments during the day. An "able corps of eloquent speakers" had been secured. In case of rain, the meeting would be held indoors at Waverly Hall in South Framingham.[3]

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[1] This was an error which went unnoticed; the anniversary was the eighty-fourth, not the eighty-fifth.

[2] New York *National Anti-Slavery Standard,* June 23, 30; Boston *Liberator,* June 8, 15, 22, 29, 1860.

THE MEETING PLACE

By 1860 the Grove at Framingham, which had been in use for eight years, was considered by the abolitionists as one of their traditional and sanctified meeting places. One of them said: "This grove has been so often the scene of meetings like this, and has been consecrated so many times by the eloquence of those whose names are to be as 'household words' in the future, that it must be honored as a place of historical interest."[4]

The Grove was the creation of a retired Boston merchant, Lathrop Wight, who purchased the tract of fifteen acres in southeast Framingham, improved it for public meetings, and opened it with formal ceremonies on June 10, 1852.[5] A contemporary wrote:

> It is a beautiful spot. . . . In its center is a little amphitheatre, containing the speaker's platform, around which arise the seats of the audience with remarkable gradation. The young oak trees, of which it is composed, afford a pleasant, cooling shade, but are not so thick as to shut out entirely the shimmering sunlight, which illumines and gladdens the whole with its golden touch. A few rods from the grove spreads a charming sheet of water known as Farm Pond, as attractive to the eye of the gazer as to the lovers of boating who frequent its broad expanse.[6]

In an age given to outdoor meetings, the Framingham Grove was ideal for large gatherings. It was used by pleasure parties and church, school, and temperance groups; yet those in the community report that "the best remembered purpose" of the Grove meetings "was that of the Abolitionists under the guidance of William Lloyd Garrison and Wendell Phillips. . . . During a decade they drew great crowds of people from within and without the State."[7]

The Society's liking for the Grove stemmed only from its virtues as a meeting place, and not from any particular relationship of the town of Framingham to the antislavery movement. For Framingham was strongly race conscious. As one historian notes, "As late as 1826, when the First Baptist Society built its meeting-house in the Centre, pews for the exclusive use of colored people were constructed in a kind of attic gallery, reached by separate stairs."[8] Even on July 4, 1854, the occasion of the abolitionists' first Independence Day meeting in the Grove, Dr. Henry O. Stone of Framingham, in addressing the gathering, was forced to regret that he "could not bid them welcome in the name of all the people of the town, but he had no authority to do so, and could only, in behalf of a handful of abolitionists, and in behalf of the millions in bonds, bid them the very heartiest welcome."[9]

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[3] Boston *Liberator,* June 29, 1860.

[4] New York *National Anti-Slavery Standard,* July 14, 1860. The Garrisonians had used the Framingham Grove for their Fourth of July meetings consistently since 1854. Immediately prior to that the anniversary had been observed at the Grove in Abington.

[5] *Memorial of the Bi-Centennial Celebration of the Town of Framingham, 1900* (South Framingham, Mass., 1900), p. 138.

[6] New York *National Anti-Slavery Standard,* July 14, 1860.

[7] *Memorial of Framingham,* p. 139.

THE AUDIENCE

When July Fourth, 1860, dawned, it appeared as if the meeting might have to be held in Waverly Hall, for a rain of the night before continued into the the morning. However, as the *National Anti-Slavery Standard* reported, ". . . about nine o'clock, the boding skies, which had threatened to cast a damper on our arrangements, began to brighten; and as the long train, bearing its precious freight, left the depot [in Boston], the sun burst forth in all its brilliance, and scattered the thick clouds before its searching rays."

Shortly after the Boston contingent reached Framingham, it was joined by a delegation of several hundred from Milford and its surrounding area. Four hundred tickets were reportedly sold in Milford alone. The *Standard*'s reporter wrote that "by noon the company on the ground had swelled to thousands. We doubt if ever a larger, more intelligent or orderly gathering was ever congregated in that beautiful grove, even on such an occasion, remarkable as they always are, for the intelligence and high character of those who answer the call." The crowd not only filled the seats of the "spacious ampitheatre [sic] . . . but a large circle of eager listeners stood outside them."[10]

This crowd was by no means a representative cross section of the Massachusetts population. Few delegates of the laboring class were present. "American wageworkers remained indifferent, if not hostile, to Abolition;" "the great majority . . . of men and women . . . who joined the Anti-Slavery Society were plain, hard working people, for the most part belonging to the farmer, artisan and lower middle class." Regardless of their economic status, the radical abolitionists exhibited common characteristics, which, in terms of the total population, were atypical. As Korngold says, "In their enthusiasm and willingness to risk life, property and reputation for the cause of emancipation, the members of the society reminded one of the early Christians. They would travel three hundred miles or more on horseback or by wagon to attend an Anti-Slavery meeting, would distribute Abolitionist literature among their neighbors, often at great personal risk; would conduct a station on the Underground Railroad, helping slaves to escape—indeed, were ready for almost any sacrifice."[11]

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[8] H. H. Temple, *History of Framingham, Massachusetts, Early Known as Danforth's Farms, with a Genealogical Register* (Framingham, 1887), p. 238.

[9] Boston *Liberator*, July 14, 1854.

[10] July 14; Boston *Liberator*, July 13, 1860.

In spite of their sacrifices through the years, and the fact that the Civil War was but months away, the abolitionists felt that their efforts were producing few tangible results. Therefore, they turned by the thousands to the political arena. Because the position of all political parties was unsatisfactory to the Society, they sought to change the political climate in their favor. But the Society's publications in July of 1860 showed no prescience that their long labors were about to bear fruit.

The frustration of the abolitionists had been translated into militantism with John Brown's hanging seven months before. Garrison had by no means been able to convert all members of the Society to his philosophy of non-resistance; Brown's fate virtually destroyed all hope which remained for confining action to peaceful means. The abolitionists, including Garrison, hailed Brown as a hero. On November 1, 1859, the Executive Committee of the Anti-Slavery Society met in Boston and recommended that, should Brown be executed, local societies observe the day in a "manner appropriate to local communities."[12] The *Standard* announced that while Brown's heroic endeavor "does not alter *our* method, a method to adopt the *Christian* manner of overthrowing slavery . . . we willingly accept aid from the 'infidel' if he feels disposed to give it."[13] The Michigan Anti-Slavery Convention, held on the fifth and sixth of November, 1859, resolved, "that if the people, the rulers, politicians and clergy will, in their blindness and narrowness of soul, refuse to act and teach the ideas of radical antislavery, they must expect worse than Harper's Ferry tragedies. . . ."[14]

On December 2, 1859, the night of Brown's execution, meetings were held by antislavery groups throughout the country. At Tremont Temple, in Boston, Garrison asked in his speech, "How many non-resistants are there here tonight? (A single voice—'I') There is *one!* (Laughter) . . . Nevertheless I am a non-resistant. . . . Yet, as a peace man—an ultra peace man—I am prepared to say, 'Success to every slave insurrection at the South, and in every slave country!' (Enthusiastic applause)."[15]

On the Fourth of July, during the celebration at Framingham, another large group of abolitionists met beside John Brown's grave in North Elba, New York. Among the twelve hundred persons in attendance were a few escaped members of the Harper's Ferry party, each with a $1500 Virginia price tag on his head. One of these, Frances J. Merriman, asked the assemblage, "How many of those present would protect him and his comrades from the bloodhounds of Virginia? 'All of us,' was the hearty response. 'How many of you . . . if we should determine to stay here among these mountains, and the Governor of New York issued warrants for our arrest upon a requisition of the Governor of Virginia, would aid in defending us against such process?' 'I would' and 'I', 'I', came from a large number of persons."[16] At the end of the meeting the North Elba abolitionists issued a statement, saying, "[We reaffirm] our unalterable faith in the Principles of Universal Freedom, and reiterate our determination, by *All* and *Every* means, to aid the slave to become free, leaving to each individual conscience the sole right of determining in what manner and at what time these principles shall be translated into acts."[17]

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[11] Ralph Korngold, *Two Friends of Men* (Boston, 1950), pp. 64, 78.
[12] New York *National Anti-Slavery Standard,* Nov. 5, 1859.
[13] Nov. 19, 1859.
[14] New York *National Anti-Slavery Standard,* Dec. 3, 1859,
[15] Boston *Liberator,* Dec. 16, 1859.

The abolitionists' audiences, in Framingham and elsewhere, were not in a mood to temporize.

THE SPEAKER

The meeting in the Grove was called to order at eleven o'clock. Opening ceremonies included an oral listing of the officers of the Society, some remarks by President Edmund Quincy, and the reading of a letter from Samuel May, Jr., the general agent for the Society. Then the group sang "Freedom's Battle Song" and listened to a long poem. This poem, composed by Miss Bacon, of Barre, and read by Garrison, so moved the crowd that the reading was interrupted by frequent applause. Immediately following the poetry, Edmund Quincy rose to introduce the first speaker of the day—H. Ford Douglass of Chicago.[18]

The man who rose to speak was a Negro. He claimed to be "about twenty-eight years old." A contemporary described him as "of very light complexion, curly black hair, and [who] possesses a handsome, open countenance, a musical but manly voice, an earnest manner of speaking, and withal a *physique* so noble and a presence so attractive as to charm and interest the listener at once."[19]

If Douglass was twenty-eight at Framingham, he began his public speaking career at an early age. For in 1854, when he would have been only twenty-two, he was prominent enough to be invited to an Emigration Convention at Cleveland, Ohio, where he shared the platform with J. M. Langston.[20] The speech he gave there reveals that he had by then developed his technique of speech composition.[21] The style and method are strikingly similar to those he used six years later. At twenty-two he was a capable and obviously experienced orator.

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[16] *Douglass' Monthly*, Sept., 1860, p. 333.

[17] Boston *Liberator*, July 27, 1860.

[18] Boston *Liberator*, July 13, 1860. The speakers who followed Douglass were F. B. Sanborn, Senator Henry Wilson, William Lloyd Garrison, Parker Pillsbury, Abby Kelley Foster, C. L. Remond (a Negro), and Stephen S. Foster.

[19] New York *National Anti-Slavery Standard*, July 14, 1860. Though Douglass, in his speech, boasted that there did not course in his veins "a single drop of Saxon blood," his light color was further attested by a reporter for the "*Chic. Cong. Herald*" who thought he was a mulatto! (*Douglass' Monthly*, Mar., 1859, p. 45.) The *Chic. Cong. Herald*, unlisted in the *Union List of Serials*, was probably the *Congregational Herald*, published in Chicago, which existed under that name from 1853 to 1861. (*Newspapers and Periodicals of Illinois, 1814–1879* [Springfield, 1910], p. 58.)

His reputation was relatively widespread in antislavery circles in Illinois. On February 1, 1859, the African Methodist Episcopal Church on Jackson Street, Chicago, was filled to capacity with white and colored listeners, assembled to hear a speech by the internationally famous Frederick Douglass. At its conclusion, the audience called for H. Ford Douglass. The latter rose with reluctance, protesting that he was loath to follow the eloquent Frederick, and that he had not come prepared to speak. Being unprepared, he asked the audience to select a topic for him. When "The Dred Scott Decision" and "Emigration" were suggested, he spoke on both topics. The report to *Douglass' Monthly* says of him: "This young man is most unquestionably an earnest, clear and forceful speaker. So far as I have heard, I think I may venture to say he is the colored Clay of America. He is clear and brilliant in statement, happy in declamation, and is well calculated to arouse the multitude."[22]

A short time later Frederick Douglass lectured in Plymouth Hall in Freeport, Illinois. Once again, at the conclusion of the lecture, "in response to an unanimous call from the audience, Mr. H. Ford Douglass, of Chicago, another living evidence of the 'humanity' extant in the colored race, took the stand and delivered a brief address on the subject of slavery. It was eloquent, earnest and scathing."[23]

But though Ford Douglass was popular enough to have audiences call for him in Illinois, he was relatively unknown in the East. He had been discovered by Parker Pillsbury, a "field hand" in the Garrison antislavery movement, during a trip to the West.[24] Pillsbury's enthusiasm led to Douglass' appearance on the Eastern lecture platform. His first speech in that area was at the New England Anti-Slavery Convention held on May 30–31, 1860, in Melodeon Hall in Boston. The "impression made was of a highly favorable character."[25] Later he was remembered as "The young colored orator who so surprised us at the last New England Anti-Slavery Convention."[26] Between his maiden eastern speech and the Fourth of July address, he spoke before the Essex County Anti-Slavery Society; in Valley Falls, Rhode Island; and in New Bedford and Milford, Massachusetts.[27]

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[20] Langston was young at the time, too—only twenty-five. Later he was to become the first citizen with Negro blood elected to public office in Ohio.

[21] *Speech of H. Ford Douglass in Reply to Mr. J. M. Langston before the Emigration Convention at Cleveland, Ohio, August 27, 1854* (Chicago, 1855).

[22] Mar., 1859, p. 40. This report is signed by "W." It is high praise of this impromptu speech to have it appear in Frederick Douglass' paper, for Frederick and Ford were in basic disagreement on most issues—particularly emigration, the Constitution as a slave document, and action in the political area. Frederick Douglass himself was not impressed by Ford's intellect. On the occasion of the Chicago speeches, when Frederick rose to refute Ford's position on emigration, he withheld any praise of Ford's thinking, saying only that he disagreed with his namesake "not withstanding his abilities as a speaker, splendid eloquence, and silvery toned voice." When Frederick returned east, after this swing through the West, he wrote a long article describing his trip. Though he had toured with Ford, frequently sharing the speaking platform with him, the account contains no tribute to his younger colleague.

[23] Freeport *Journal*, in *Douglass' Monthly*, Mar., 1859, p. 45.

[24] *Douglass' Monthly*, July, 1859, p. 100.

THE SPEECH

Douglass' address was in keeping with the tone of the announcement of the meeting. It was a commemorative address, but not of the usual type. Instead of taking pride in the event the country was celebrating, the speaker deplored it and was critical of both the Founding Fathers and the leaders of his own day. Instead of the usual speech of praise, here was a speech primarily of blame.

The orator's broad theme was that slavery dominated all phases of American life. As he put it, "Every department of national life—the President's chair, the Supreme Court, and the American pulpit—is occupied by the dark spirit of American slavery." Actually, however, he developed his theme only with respect to political life. His more limited central thought was that "so far as the principles of freedom and the hopes of the black man are concerned, all [the] parties are barren and unfruitful."

Although the speaker castigated all of the national parties and many of the political leaders, he focused his attack on Abraham Lincoln and the Republicans. He dealt only briefly with Stephen A. Douglas, declaring that the senator was not a great statesman because he did not have "that essential quality for statesmanship, a heart." Then he turned his attention to Lincoln, devoting about a third of his address to Lincoln's position on slavery. He found nothing to praise! "Abraham Lincoln is simply a Henry Clay Whig, and he believes just as Henry Clay believed in regard to this question. And Henry Clay was just as odious to the anti-slavery cause and anti-slavery men as ever was John C. Calhoun."

This discussion led Douglass into the subject of the Illinois Republican party and its discrimination against Negroes, a point he developed primarily with personal references. Then he moved to the Massachusetts Republican party, singling out Senator Wilson for special mention, primarily for not being "in favor of bringing out negro equality. . . ."

This material, transitional in nature, led Douglass to his second main di-

[25] Boston *Liberator*, June 8, 1860.
[26] New York *National Anti-Slavery Standard*, July 14, 1860.
[27] Announcements in the Boston *Liberator*, May, June, 1860.

vision, a discussion of the equality of the Negro with the white man. It is evident that his heart was in this argument; he believed it deeply. He was on familiar ground, handling a subject that had been long in his thoughts and which he had talked about often before. His position essentially was this: "You may take down the white and black parts of the social and political structure, stone by stone, and in all the relations of life, where the exercise of his moral and intellectual functions is not restricted by positive law or by the arbitrary restraints of society, you will find the negro the equal of the white man in all the elements of head and heart."

Douglass then came back to the day being commemorated, once again deploring the failure of American society to rid itself of slavery. In a neat summary, in which he took occasion to praise Britain and condemn the United States, he said: ". . . in view of the fact that the influence of slavery is dominant in every department of the government, I would rather curse than bless the hour that marked the fatal epoch in American history, when we threw off the yoke of a decent despotism, to become in turn, the slaves of a mean and arrogant Democracy."

This would have made a good conclusion, but Douglass went on. He launched an attack against the Constitution for being proslavery, and then, changing his pace rather abruptly, closed with brief praise of the leaders of the abolitionist cause. His conclusion had the sad air of a funeral dirge: "Alvan Stewart is dead; James G. Birney is dead; Elijah P. Lovejoy sleeps in a martyr's grave on the banks of the father of waters; Ellis Gray Loring is dead; Theodore Parker is dead." On this note, heightened by a final reference to "the fresh-made grave of John Brown," the speech ended.

Basic Ideas

Three main ideas dominated the speech: condemnation of the political parties for not supporting the antislavery cause; the Negro race is not inferior and therefore deserves equality; honor is due those who have fought for the achievement of this equality for the Negro. Interwoven with these direct arguments were two ancillary ideas, not fully developed but important to Douglass' position: since slavery is bad, it should be abolished immediately; those who are not completely for the antislavery crusade are against it.

Reflected in the speech is the fundamental difference of opinion, still obtaining among those who seek racial equality, between those who would move slowly and those who demand complete reforms at once.[28] Douglass, in his own words, was ". . . seeking the overthrow of slavery in the shortest possible way," and this led him to be impatient with those who counseled caution. To him they were hypocrites, people who talked freedom but did not practice it. Their hypocrisy could be pointed out on no better day than the Fourth of July, with its emphasis on the successful fight for freedom from Great Britain. As Douglass said toward the end of his address, ". . . we mean to come here and criticize the various political parties in order to rescue this day from priestly cant and political mockery."[29]

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[28] *Bulletin of America's Town Meeting of the Air*, "Are We Solving America's Race Problem?" May 24, 1945; "What Should We Do About Race Segregation?" Nov. 9, 1948.

Adaptation to Situation

The favorable audience situation made it easy for Douglass to present a sharp and vigorous statement. He spoke as a true follower of Garrison, who had written almost thirty years earlier: "On this subject I do not wish to speak or write with moderation. . . ."[30] Douglass understood that he was talking mainly to a sympathetic group. Throughout he referred to them as "antislavery men." Many times he called them "friends." He even identified himself with the audience, saying "we" and "our position."[31] He assumed that he was talking to people of one mind, sharply differentiated from "Boston conservatism," which "goes down to the Music Hall to air itself in Everett's lying eulogy."[32] The audience accepted this interpretation and responded in a friendly way.[33]

As Wendell Phillips had said seven years before, the antislavery people had "facts for those who think, arguments for those who reason," but they also recognized that there were "far more dead hearts to be quickened, than confused intellects to be cleared up."[34] Douglass worked in both of these directions. Evidence and argument were used in both of the two main sections in the body of the speech, particularly in the attack on Lincoln. Motivational appeals also appeared in both sections but were more important in the point on racial equality than in that on the dereliction of the Republican party. The eulogistic section which concluded the speech was epideictic in nature, almost pure emotion. At no place did Douglass spell out a plan of action; this was left entirely to implication.

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[29] "Priestly cant and political mockery" was a favorite phrase of Douglass'; see Boston *Liberator*, July 27, 1860. The Republicans were the recipients of special censure, partly because their platform was more conservative than it had been in 1856. (Emerson David Fite, *The Presidential Campaign of 1860* [New York, 1911], pp. 237–243; R. H. Luthin, *The First Lincoln Campaign* [Cambridge, Mass., 1944], pp. 149, 173.)

[30] Benjamin Brawley, *A Short History of the American Negro* (New York, 1922), p. 67.

[31] At first he said "you antislavery men" and "you Garrisonians." This may have reflected a deep-seated reluctance on the part of a Negro to identify himself with an audience predominantly white.

[32] Everett was the principal speaker at the Fourth of July celebration in Boston, a rival meeting, from the point of view of the abolitionists.

[33] The report of the address in the New York *National Anti-Slavery Standard* shows more than twenty instances of favorable response: applause, laughter, and cries of "Hear, hear!" No unfavorable responses are noted and no surprise is expressed at the tenor of the remarks.

[34] Wendell Phillips, *Speeches, Lectures and Letters* (Boston, 1894), I, 106.

Sources of the Ideas

Douglass cannot be credited with much originality. He leaned heavily upon Phillips, Garrison, and other antislavery leaders. The broad thesis which he enunciated at the start had long been a standard theme. In like manner, the idea of equality was basic to the whole antislavery cause. Scarcely a speech was made which did not refer to the Declaration of Independence and its statement about all men being created equal.[35] The drive for immediate emancipation also was some thirty years old. Garrison had presented this as his program when he started the *Liberator* in 1831. In fact, the motto of the antislavery movement was "Immediate Unconditional Emancipation on the Soil." Similarly, it was traditional for antislavery men to distrust the sincerity of the political parties.[36]

Even most of the supporting arguments which Douglass presented were not original with him. The attack on Lincoln had been anticipated by Phillips less than two weeks before.[37] Clay was a favorite target of the abolitionists. The Fugitive Slave Law had been under fire for many years. Garrison had made a statement concerning the proslavery character of the Constitution as early as 1838. In 1854, in this very Framingham grove, he had publicly burned the Constitution to protest its proslavery nature.[38]

Douglass selected basic premises which were widely held and frequently cited. He developed them through the use of ideas which had become the common property of antislavery speakers. Into the framework he wove some personal experiences. He made the discussion current by relating it to the presidential canvass, using arguments that Wendell Phillips had recently employed.

The Attack on Lincoln

Douglass' attack on Lincoln was developed under six heads: (1) Lincoln's views were the same as those of Henry Clay, "odious to the anti-slavery cause"; (2) Lincoln and his party wanted to remove slavery too gradually; (3) Lincoln agreed with Senator Douglas that "the people in the Territories should regulate their domestic institutions in their own way"; (4) Lincoln favored the Fugitive Slave Law; (5) Lincoln refused once to sign a petition to repeal Illinois's "Testimony Law," which prohibited Negroes from testifying against whites; (6) Lincoln did not favor social and political equality for the Negro.

Douglass did not attempt to support his contention that Lincoln agreed with Clay on slavery, probably because Lincoln readily admitted that he was a disciple of Clay's.[39] The orator's only proof in this section was designed to show that Clay had been odious to those opposed to slavery; to do this he quoted one of the senator's speeches in which he had declared that the law "sanctioned and sanctified property in slaves."[40] Lincoln would not have agreed that Clay had been in favor of slavery. In his eulogy of Clay in 1852 he strongly emphasized that the Whig leader "ever was in principle and in feeling, opposed to slavery."[41] However, the Fourth of July speaker was right in saying that Lincoln and his party were following a "go-slow" policy on slavery in 1860. Richard Luthin concludes that Lincoln was convinced that radicalism would jeopardize the Republican cause. Korngold adds, ". . . a friend of the Negro could hardly have regarded Lincoln as an ideal candidate. . . ."[42]

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[35] *The Words of Garrison: A Centennial Selection (1805–1905) of Characteristic Sentiments From the Witness of William Lloyd Garrison* (Boston, 1905), p. 19.

[36] Phillips, I, 153, 113.

[37] Boston *Liberator*, June 22, 1860.

[38] Phillips, I, 119; Garrison, p. 134; Boston *Liberator*, July 14, 1854.

[39] In his speech at Ottawa on Aug. 21, 1858, Lincoln referred to "Henry Clay, my

Only four months before (February 27), Lincoln had delivered in New York his celebrated Cooper Institute Address, designed primarily to show that the Republican party was not overly extreme. Here he condemned John Brown for the Harper's Ferry incident, lent his support to Jefferson's statement that through gradual emancipation and deportation slavery eventually would disappear, and affirmed, "Wrong as we think slavery is, we can yet afford to let it alone where it is, because there is much due to the necessity arising from its actual presence in the nation."[43]

The Republican platform of 1860 followed this conservative lead. Lincoln himself did practically no speaking in the campaign, but his supporters tried to minimize the issue of slavery and to emphasize that of the tariff. A friend wrote to Stephen Douglas late in July, 1860, "The Republicans in their speeches, say nothing of the nigger question, but all is made to turn on the tariff."[44]

Ford Douglass' denunciation of Lincoln for agreeing with Senator Douglas that the admission of new slave states could not be avoided if the people

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beau ideal of a statesman, the man for whom I fought all my humble life. . . ." (*Abraham Lincoln: His Speeches and Writings*, Roy P. Basler, ed. [Cleveland, 1946], p. 460.) The connection between Lincoln and Clay was cited frequently during the 1858 and 1860 campaigns. In Republican parades in 1860 signs often appeared carrying the words, "Abraham Lincoln, the Friend of Henry Clay." (Walter E. Meyer, "The Presidential Campaign of 1860 in Illinois," unpub. thesis [Univ. of Chicago, 1913], p. 49.)

[40] Clay made the statement in the Senate on Feb. 7, 1839, in a speech on "Abolition Petitions." He was making the point that there were serious obstacles to immediate abolition. One of these was "the immense amount of capital invested in slave property." (*Speeches of the Honorable Henry Clay of the Congress of the United States*, Richard Chambers, ed. [Cincinnati, 1842], pp. 375–376.)

[41] In his Alton speech (Oct. 15, 1858) he twice quoted with approval a statement in which Clay had presented his position on slavery. Clay had said, "I desire no concealment of my opinions. . . . I look upon it as a great evil and deeply lament that we have derived it from the parental government and from our ancestors." (*The Writings of Abraham Lincoln*, Arthur Brooks Lapsley, ed. [New York, 1906], IV, 215–284.) In a letter to Williamson Durley, 1845, Lincoln declared that the election of Clay to the presidency in 1844 would have prevented the extension of slavery. (*Lincoln: Speeches and Writings*, pp. 170, 274.)

[42] Luthin, p. 73; Korngold, p. 264.

[43] *Lincoln: Speeches and Writings*, pp. 529–536.

[44] Helfenstein to Douglas, July 31, 1860 (Douglas Papers, Univ. of Chicago Library).

of the territories so voted was based on the statement which Lincoln had made at Freeport. Lincoln, in answer to a direct question from Douglas, had accepted, reluctantly, the decision of the Supreme Court in the Dred Scott case, made only the year before.[45]

What Douglass did not mention was that throughout the Illinois debates Lincoln had, as Senator Douglas himself had said, "conducted a crusade against the Supreme Court . . . because of the Dred Scott decision."[46] In the Cooper Institute Address Lincoln argued at length that the Constitution did *not* prohibit our federal government from controlling slavery within its boundaries.[47] This became the position of the Republican party in the 1860 campaign. Carried to its extreme, it enabled them to argue that the decision of the Court was unconstitutional and therefore not binding.

Lincoln's hope was that slavery could be kept from spreading beyond its present boundaries and then gradually eliminated from the rest of the Union. In 1858 he said in a speech at Edwardsville, Illinois, that the people should use "every constitutional method to prevent the evil from becoming larger . . ." and should look toward its "ultimate peaceable extinction in God's own good time."[48]

Douglass was correct in saying that at Freeport Lincoln had declared that the people of the southern states were entitled to a fugitive slave law. As early as 1854 Lincoln had indicated that he believed that slave owners should have the protection of the law.[49] It was true, too, that in 1849 Lincoln had introduced a bill in Congress which would have permitted fugitive slaves to be arrested in the District of Columbia. But Douglass neglected to mention that the main purpose of the bill was to prohibit slavery at the seat of the national capitol.[50] His statement that Lincoln had refused two years before to sign a petition to repeal the Testimony Law in Illinois may very well have been true.[51] After the Fourth of July celebration at Framingham the *Boston Courier* called upon Republican journals to contradict the charge. Other New England papers picked up the controversy, but on September 5, the *New Hampshire Patriot* noted that the attack had not been denied.[52] This was in keeping with Lincoln's refusal to make political statements for publication during the campaign.[53]

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[45] *Writings of Lincoln,* III, 245–247.

[46] This is the way Douglas put it when he summarized the three main points of Lincoln's case at Alton.

[47] *Lincoln: Speeches and Writings,* p. 518.

[48] *Writings of Lincoln,* V, 13.

[49] See speech at Peoria, Oct. 16, 1854 (*Lincoln: Speeches and Writings,* p. 292).

[50] *Cong. Globe,* Jan. 12, 1849.

[51] At Ottawa on Aug. 21, 1858, Lincoln said, "I have no purpose to introduce political and social equality between the white and black races" (*Writings of Lincoln,* III, 209).

[52] Aug. 22, Sept. 5, 1860.

[53] On June 19, 1860, Lincoln wrote to Samuel Galloway, "by . . . the united voice of all discreet friends I can neither write or speak a word for the public." (*Lincoln: Speeches and Writings,* p. 556.)

The final charge against Lincoln was that in a speech at Columbus, Ohio, he had asserted he was not in favor of bringing about political equality for the Negro. It was true. Lincoln had taken great pains there in 1859 to show that he had never argued for political and social equality. But he also had reiterated his belief that the Negro was entitled to all the natural rights enumerated in the Declaration of Independence.[54]

Thus, what Douglass said of Lincoln was essentially correct. The orator may be condemned for serious omissions, but the attack, taken by itself, must be largely accepted. Lincoln was essentially cautious and conservative; Douglass was impatient and radical.

The Attacks on Senators Douglas and Wilson

The brief attack on Senator Douglas was entirely personal and emotional. It arose because the chairman had made a play on the name Douglas[s] in introducing the speaker. Douglass' impromptu response was bitter but provoked applause from the partisan audience. The criticism of Senator Wilson, made in passing, also was brief. The reference was to a Senate debate of several months before in which, Douglass said, Wilson had admitted that the Negro was inferior. The statement was true,[55] but Douglass did not make clear that Wilson was a staunch supporter of the antislavery movement and active in the Senate in its behalf. Even the admission about Negro inferiority was made during an argument in favor of a bill to provide education for Negro children in the District.[56]

Wilson was in the audience at Framingham and later spoke in defense of his position. Even the abolitionists were impressed by his strong and sincere opposition to slavery. A correspondent for the *National Anti-Slavery Standard* wrote: "The speech was so anti-slavery, and the good spirit of the speaker so manifest, that I care not to criticize even his sophistries. . . ."[57]

The Case for Negro Equality

Having accused Lincoln and Wilson of failure to support Negro equality, Douglass apparently felt that the next step was to prove that the Negro was not, in fact, inferior. His argument was largely historical. Asserting that the superior position of the white man was not due to superior qualities, but to favorable environment, he noted that the Saxons had not always occupied the high position that they held in 1860. No race, he said, was able "to lift itself into respectability without contact with other civilized tribes." He went on to show that the Negro race possessed a proud history, that it had demonstrated in the past that it was not inferior.

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[54] *Writings of Lincoln*, V, 32–36.

[55] *Cong. Globe*, Apr. 13, 1860. Wilson was asked several direct questions by Jefferson Davis, not Mason, as Douglass said. He replied, "The Natural equality of all men I believe in, as far as rights are concerned. So far as mental or physical equality is concerned, I believe the African race is inferior to the white race."

[56] *Cong. Globe*, Mar. 14, 21, Apr. 13, 17, 1860. In the First Session of the Thirty-Sixth Congress Wilson introduced several bills designed to secure the effectual suppression of the African slave trade. Luthin (p. 108) points out that Wilson was one of the leaders of the radical wing of the Republican party in Massachusetts.

[57] July 7, 1860.

Interest in the racial equality argument ran high at this time. The Senate debate in which Wilson participated was representative of the heated discussions. Both Ashley-Montagu and Clyde Kluckhorn emphasize that before the Civil War the proponents of slavery made great efforts to reinforce the white superiority concept.[58] The many books on ethnology which appeared in the middle of the century attest to the importance of the issue.[59]

Agreement with Douglass' historical argument has grown with the years. The evidence he advanced is generally accepted and the conclusions he drew are widely held.[60]

The Case for England and Against the Constitution

It was natural that the occasion should lead Douglass to think of Great Britain. But as an abolitionist he could not honestly join in celebrating separation from a nation so far ahead of his own on the slavery issue. Britain's emancipation of her slaves on August 1, 1834, had been an inspiration to the antislavery societies. This date became their "Fourth of July"; annually they celebrated it, even long after the Civil War. As Frederick Douglass said at Elmira, New York, in 1880, "Emancipation in the West Indies was . . . the first ray of hope; the first tangible fact demonstrating the possibility of a peaceable transition . . . to freedom. . . ."[61]

Douglass' charges against the Constitution generally followed the Garrisonian line that it was a proslavery document.[62] His position, however, was not completely clear. He made much of the equivocal nature of the Constitution on slavery and seemed to conclude that the Founding Fathers had no real intention of opposing it. The language and tone of the passage are reminiscent of a paragraph from a speech by Henry Clay in which he argued that it was unrealistic to assume that the founders had sought to abolish slavery.[63] There was disagreement among the enemies of slavery on this point. The abolitionists usually argued that the Constitution favored slavery. But Frederick Douglass and others thought that it would be better to contend that the authors of that document actually had intended to oppose it.[64] Ford Douglass apparently was confused by these conflicting arguments.

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[58] M. F. Ashley-Montagu, *Man's Most Dangerous Myth: The Fallacy of Race* (New York, 1942), p. 21; Clyde Kluckhorn, *Mirror For Man: The Relation of Anthropology to Modern Life* (New York, 1949), p. 135.

[59] Typical of these books were: J. C. Nott, *Two Lectures on the Natural History of the Caucasian and Negro Races* (Mobile, 1844) and John Campbell, *Negro-Mania: Being an Example of the Falsely Assumed Equality of the Various Races of Men* (Philadelphia, 1851).

[60] Dr. Franz Boas, Prof. of Anthropology at Columbia University, said in 1916, "The arguments for inferiority drawn from the history of civilization . . . are weak." (*Select Discussions of Race Problems* [Atlanta, 1916], no. 20, pp. 83–85); see also Ethel Alpenfels, *Sense and Nonsense About Race* (New York, 1946), p. 28.

[61] Frederick Douglass, *Life and Times of Frederick Douglass* (Hartford, 1882), p. 504.

[62] Brawley, p. 67; Phillips, I, 119.

[63] Quoted by Lincoln in his Alton speech. Clay talked about a "secret purpose" and used such phrases as "tortured into . . ."

Personal and Motivational Appeals

In keeping with his argument that the Negro was not inferior, Douglass did not come before his audience in an apologetic attitude. He spoke in straightforward and dignified fashion about a problem that concerned him deeply and intimately. He talked frankly about the fact that he was colored and showed pride in his race, even going to the extreme of disparaging the heritage of many of those in his audience.[65] He did not seek to qualify himself as a political expert, except through remarking that he knew Lincoln and by recounting his experience with the Testimony Law petition. In this carefully developed personal example he offered his strongest ethical argument. Later he made brief personal references, such as "What can I say then as a black man," but he did not labor his relation to the subject.

Our first reaction today would be that Douglass was too critical of his country and too tactless in dealing with his opponents to win good will. We would wonder about the extremeness of his views, the positiveness of his opinions, his occasional sarcastic manner, and his tendency to "protest too much." It must be remembered, however, that he spoke to a partisan group, dedicated to abolitionist views.

The speech had strong emotional motivations, but these appeals did not predominate over the more logical aspects. Only occasionally did Douglass "pull the stops." Logic and emotion usually were closely interwoven. The basic appeal was to love of freedom, and its opposite, hatred of oppression.[66] The orator sought to arouse indignation and anger that would lead ultimately to justice and fair play. Shame was used to this same end.[67] The softer appeal to pity, although present, was subdued.[68] The appeal to pride was not that of pride in country, but rather to pride in the noble cause of antislavery.[69]

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[64] *Douglass' Monthly*, May, 1859, p. 66. In a reference to the failure of Massachusetts to pass the Personal Liberty Law, Douglass said, "In one respect the Abolitionists are themselves to blame. . . . For years they have been endeavoring to fasten a proslavery interpretation on the Constitution of the United States."

[65] When he said, "Now friends, I am proud of the Negro race, and I thank God today that there does not course in my veins a single drop of Anglo-Saxon blood," the audience applauded.

[66] "[The Fugitive Slave Law] not only strikes down the liberty of every black man in the United States, but virtually the liberty of every white man as well. . . ." Note also the appeal to the self-interest of the white audience.

[67] "In that State [Illinois] we have a code of black laws that would disgrace any Barbary State. . . ."

[68] "[I] thank the men and women of New England who have so nobly stood by the rights and liberties of my unfortunate race during these long years of suffering and sorrow." Note also the appeal to pride.

[69] "I know that, as antislavery men, occupying the high vantage ground of right . . ."

Through Biblical quotations and direct references, religious feelings were tied in.[70] Humor, sometimes cutting, was employed with effect.[71]

The emotional impact of the speech cannot be ignored. Even after a lapse of a century, one is caught up in the determination and enthusiasm of those who fought to liberate the slaves.

Supporting Details

Douglass' talk was surprisingly well supported. He referred to specific actions and particular statements of Lincoln and Wilson. He quoted John Adams, John Quincy Adams, Henry Clay, and Gerrit Smith. He mentioned the Whig platform of 1852, the inscription on the Liberty Bell, and the Star Spangled Banner. He cited general and specific historical material, ranging over Egyptian, Roman, British, and American subjects. He treated in some detail the example of the Hungarian refugee, Martin Kozta. Literary references and quotations abounded, especially in the conclusion. Cicero, Virgil, Homer, Goethe, Shakespeare, the Bible, Macaulay, Lowell, and Whittier were among those sources quoted. Two anecdotes were used to illustrate points, one quite aptly.[72]

In most instances Douglass' reasoning was sound and his evidence adequate. Use of authority on the equality issue, however, would have bolstered his case. His evidence could have been more carefully documented. His attack on the Constitution needed analysis and support of the type that Lincoln developed in the Cooper Institute Address. One of his stories was overly developed, holding up the progress of the main thought.[73]

Language

The orator's language generally was clear, direct, and to the point, but at times he succumbed to a temptation to produce "fine writing." Noticeable throughout, this was especially evident in the latter part of the speech. The following sentences are typical of his usual style: "Take Abraham Lincoln. I want to know if any man can tell me the difference between the anti-slavery of Abraham Lincoln and the anti-slavery of Henry Clay? Why, there is no difference between them." The more showy passages were quite different. Representative is this sentence: "All other races are permitted to travel over the wide field of history and pluck the flowers that blossom there —to glean up the heroes, philosophers, sages and poets, and put them into a galaxy of brilliant genius. . . ."

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[70] "The Negro is emphatically a Christian man. . . ."

[71] "Here in this country . . . we have idiots and fools, some in the lunatic asylum, and others in the high places of government . . . who ought to be there."

[72] In illustration of the caution of the Republicans, he referred to Washington Irving's story of the Dutchman who, wanting to jump a ditch, went back so far to get a good start that when he finally got up to the starting point he had to stop to rest.

[73] This was the story of a wild young man, a tentative convert to the church, who reluctantly accepted the account of Jonah and the whale, but when asked to believe other miracles finally declared, "I will be d----d if I believe it, *nor* the fish story either."

Douglass was adept at "picturing ideas." Phrases such as "marshalled themselves on the highway of American politics," "the State lays its iron hand upon the Negro," and "we can nestle in the shaggy mane of the British lion," spoke to the eye as well as to the ear. Directness was secured by use of questions ("Now, I want to put this question to those who deny the equal manhood of the Negro . . ."), identification ("Then it was that *our* friend . . ."), and references to the listeners ("I know that, as anti-slavery men . . .").

Douglass' language, dignified without being pompous, correct without being mechanical, seemed appropriate to the occasion. The lapses into "oratorical" style were not so frequent as to be disturbing and probably were expected and appreciated by his Fourth of July audience. He spoke interestingly and vividly. His meaning seldom was in doubt. Generally he gave the impression of a man sincerely communicating with his listeners.

Organization

The speech had an essential unity. Most of the material contributed to the speaker's purposes and central ideas. The weakness, if any, was not one of irrelevancies but of gaps in development and support. Douglass announced more than he could deliver, but he had a theme and he contrived to drive it home.

Tightly structured in the first part, the speech gradually assumed a looser organization. Douglass occasionally wandered from his set path but usually came back into line in such a way that the relationship of ideas was clear.[74] Transitions and summaries were used effectively to bind together the materials.[75]

EFFECT OF SPEECH

The influence of Ford Douglass on this Fourth of July was mainly to confirm, entrench, and deepen ideas and attitudes already held. Those who attended the meeting were already converts and responded most favorably to the address.[76] But in addition to applauding the speech for itself, they were delighted that it provided the stimulus for Senator Wilson to speak to them. Edmund Quincy asserted that: "What gave particular zest to the meeting was the unexpected appearance of Senator Wilson on our platform, it being, I think, his first appearance for many years on that stage. . . . Mr. Garrison

[74] For example, he started to refer to "Senators from New England" but was reminded of another point against Lincoln. This led him into the discussion of equality. Six minutes later he came back to the New England Republicans in this way: "But I was speaking in reference to the gratuitous concessions of some of our Republican leaders."

[75] The following is typical: "Not only would I arraign Mr. Lincoln, in regard to that law, for his pro-slavery character and principles, but when . . ."

[76] New York *National Anti-Slavery Standard*, July 14; Boston *Liberator*, July 13, 1860.

and Mr. Pillsbury replied to him, and the episode—which indeed made up the chief of the Epoch—was a very enlivening one, though it prevented us from hearing from several whom we had depended on listening to."[77]

Few presses of the nation even noted the meeting. Those that did used the occasion to strengthen a position already held by the respective paper. Thus the *New Orleans Picayune* reported that: "The Helperites, Garrisonians, *et id omne genus,* male and female, black and white, had their usual pow wow on the 4th in a grove near Boston. Edmund Quincy, the "D.Y." of the *Anti-Slavery Standard*, and the Mr. "Byles" of the *New York Tribune* presided; a new black Douglass (neither Fred nor S. A.), Henry Wilson, a United States Senator of Massachusetts (to his shame be it spoken), and Abby Kelley Foster, were the principal orators of the occasion."[78]

Greeley's *Herald Tribune* was happy to report that: "Senator Wilson took the platform at the meeting of the abolitionists in Framingham, and replied with pertinence and good sense to some remarks by H. Ford Douglas [*sic*], of Chicago, who undertook to arraign Lincoln for some sins alleged to have been committed twelve years ago in Congress and to rebuke Wilson for admitting in the course of a debate in the Senate that the negroes are inferior to the whites in intellectual capacity."[79]

And the rabidly Democratic *New Hampshire Patriot* chose to make political capital out of Douglass' charges against Lincoln. It reprinted the section, saying that "a black man from Illinois, named H. F. Douglass" had discussed "the code of black laws in Illinois," and concluded: "This statement has not been denied by supporters of Lincoln."[80]

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

From the point of view of his partisan audience Douglass fulfilled his assignment well. Without great originality, but with able adaptation to the audience, the occasion, and the events of the period, he took standard antislavery ideas and recent political evaluations and, adding his personal testimony, unfolded them clearly, interestingly, and with conviction and spirit. His point of view, though radical, was internally consistent. His reasoning was sensible, his arguments were well supported, and his plan of procedure was functionally defensible. In the dark days before the Civil War, at a time of tension and uncertainty, Douglass talked to an audience of people sworn to abolish slavery, in a way to confirm their resolves and intensify their efforts.

In a very real sense, Douglass was an "exhibit" of the ideas he presented. Convinced of the necessity of establishing the equality of the Negro race, the antislavery people were fond of bringing Negroes of outstanding ability to the public platform in an effort to demonstrate that they could think and talk as well as their white brethren. The novelty of a Negro orator helped to draw a crowd, and his performance, insofar as it showed evidence of speaking ability and high cultural attainments, supplied support for the antislavery position. In this respect Douglass was all that the sponsors of the Framingham meeting could have asked for.

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[77] New York *National Anti-Slavery Standard,* July 14, 1860.

[78] In New York *National Anti-Slavery Standard,* Aug. 4, 1860.

[79] July 9, 1860.

[80] Sept. 5, 1860.

While the speech of Douglass may have served the purpose of stimulating a partisan audience, it certainly did not make a contribution toward bridging the gap between the slavery and antislavery forces. The orator made no overtures toward the opposition, showed no tendency to temporize. As we have seen, he even turned on those who were at least partly sympathetic with his cause. The net effect of his vigorous attack must have been to harden both sides in their positions.

Evidence from the speech itself shows that Douglass realized that his views were extreme, even for an audience made up principally of supporters. Toward the end he said, "My friends, you may think this [the attack on the Founding Fathers] is a little radical, and you may, on that account, be unwilling to receive some of the other truths I have tried to impress upon you." It was here, in practically the only section of the speech in which he showed any willingness to compromise, that he confessed that he might be "saying too much."

It would appear that Douglass was caught up in the sweep and energy of the cause he espoused and found it difficult to adapt to more moderate views. The favorable reception given to Senator Wilson by the audience at Framingham and the support which was developing throughout the North for Abraham Lincoln are indications that the Negro orator and his colleagues missed a chance to win valuable allies for their program. An acceptance of the moderating influence of these less radical leaders could well have served to reduce the friction between the two major forces in the slavery controversy.

Methodist Debates and Union Sentiment on the Border, 1860-1861

ROBERT D. CLARK

10

I

The quadrennial General Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church convened at Buffalo, New York, May 1, 1860, shortly before the breakup of the fractious Democratic Convention at Charleston and some two weeks prior to the assembling of the Republicans at Chicago. As a nonpolitical body the Methodist Church openly avowed separation from the state and disinterest in politics, but its conference was not without political significance. The storm over slavery, now threatening imminent disaster to the national government, had in 1844 burst in full fury upon the Methodists, driving off thirteen southern conferences and nearly forty per cent of the total membership.

The exodus of the Southerners had not settled the slavery issue, however, for the southern boundary of the church still included all of Maryland and extended in a jagged line into Virginia, Kentucky, Missouri, and even Arkansas and Texas.

In the first years after the separation the law of the church, which forbade the "buying and selling" of slaves, "conformable to the laws of the State,"[1] was sufficiently ambiguous to meet the needs of all parties. The radicals of New England cited the letter of the law to argue the antislavery position of the church; the moderates of the border confessed the evil of slavery but took refuge in the law of the state to explain the presence of slaveholders in the church. As the national struggle over slavery increased in intensity, the very ambiguity of the church's law proved a double-edged sword. Critics in New England condemned Methodist preachers as proslavery and critics on the border taunted them with the cry of "abolitionist."

The General Conference, therefore, faced not simply the moral issue of outlawing slavery, but the dilemma of dealing effectively with the "great evil" without endangering the unity of the church or interfering with what it regarded as its transcendent duty—the preaching of salvation.

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[1] L. C. Matlack, *The Antislavery Struggle and Triumph in the Methodist Episcopal Church* (New York, 1881), p. 71.

Party lines within the church were sharply if not clearly drawn. The "conservatives" insisted that the discipline be left unchanged, the "progressives" called for "advanced" action. Each party had its extremists—the "ultra-conservatives" of Baltimore who came breathing threats of secession if the North forced any action on slavery, and the fire-eating abolitionists of New England who demanded that nonslaveholding become a test of membership.[2] A new storm was brewing, foreboding another breakup of the church and an added threat to the federal union. Men had not forgotten what old John C. Calhoun, pointing to the Methodist division of 1844, had said about the cords of the Union snapping one by one. The Methodist Episcopal Church was, even after the loss of its southern conferences, the largest ecclesiastical body in America, and the church which most effectively bound together the border and the North. People all over the country looked to the general conference with a fearful interest. It would be an admirable test, a storm in miniature to be observed and taken into account in setting the jib for the ship of state. Despite the major attractions at the Institute and the Wigwam, the secular as well as the religious press was well represented to report and appraise the deliberations at Buffalo.

II

Two hundred and twenty-one delegates, preachers representing forty-seven "annual"[3] conferences, and a host of alternates and visitors, converged on Buffalo for the opening of the general conference.[4] About half of the delegates were presiding elders, nearly twenty of them editors, agents, and secretaries of the church, and a like number college and seminary presidents and professors. Some thirty of them were doctors of divinity, three had served in Congress in the House of Representatives, and two had been chaplains. Most of them were of middle age, from forty to sixty, vigorous men, skilled in the emotional oratory of the pulpit and the parliamentary debates of their annual conferences.[5]

The sessions at Buffalo were held in St. James Hall, the largest auditorium in the city. A plain, nearly square assembly room with wide galleries on three sides, it was used chiefly for theatrical purposes and was, much to the amusement of some delegates and the distress of others, decorated accordingly. The large roll curtain on the stage, serving as a backdrop to the dignified board of bishops and the many secretaries of the conference, depicted a scene of "some happy being crossing the river of death." The ceiling was covered with paintings representing the Muses and on the pillars of the gallery were full-length portraits of eminent actors, "in various theatrical costumes and attitudes," who, one observer noted, looked down with "seeming surprise upon the grave divines." The conference occupied the hall during the day, but it was given over to theatrical performances and public events at night. Monsieur Blondin, famous French acrobat, waiting for his rope to be stretched across the Niagara, exhibited his skill during the first days of the conference. Said a reporter for the southern Methodists: "In the same place may be seen ministers of the gospel, balancing probabilities, in the day time," and Blondin "balancing his body on a tight rope in the evening."[6]

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[2] The names "conservatives" and "progressives" were used uniformly by correspondents to the religious and secular press.

[3] The ambiguous term "annual" conference was applied to district organizations of the church which convened annually.

[4] *Daily Christian Advocate*, May 2, 12. The Buffalo *Daily Courier* estimated that 1000 persons had come to the city for the conference, in the New York *Observer*, May 24, 1860.

[5] "Manhattan," *Western Christian Advocate*, May 23, 1860.

The conference, much like a civil legislative body, conducted its major business through standing committees, including one on slavery, each of which, after investigation, argument, and compromise, made its recommendations to the assembled delegates. The committee on slavery, composed, as were the others, of forty-seven members, one from each of the annual conferences, was not ready with its report until the beginning of the third week.

The conference, allotting the afternoons and evenings to the committees for their deliberations, convened every morning to transact routine business. It received petitions and memorials from the annual conferences, sat as a court of appeals for ecclesiastical trials referred from the annual conferences, heard the address of the bishops and listened to fraternal remarks of numerous delegates representing other branches of Methodism—the Methodist Episcopal Church, South, excepted. As a legislative body, it gave consideration to questions of lay delegation, marriage and divorce, temperance, and the use of tobacco by ministers.

Slavery remained the all-absorbing question, in conference and out. Reporters for the religious and secular press, assigned to a long table in front of the platform, bored by the tedium of the proceedings, and anxious for a choice bit of news on the slavery issue, mingled like "detective police" in every circle. Delegates and reporters alike, viewing every action or discussion in the light of its possible relation to slavery, sought some omen of ultimate success or failure. The conservatives found the address of the bishops, which avoided discussion of the slavery issue, a "hard blow to the prospects of the advocates of change."[7] A flood of petitions from the membership of the church, sometimes reaching the proportion of twenty-to-one in favor of change, was to the progressives "astonishing" evidence of the sentiment of the people; but to the conservatives it was merely an indication that the radicals, having failed to secure passage of any proposition in the annual conferences, had been beating the bushes for signatures.[8] At the very outset, the progressives clearly established their dominance by electing an ardent antislavery man, Dr. W. L. Harris of Ohio Wesleyan University, the conference secretary, and by naming Calvin Kingsley, aggressive antislavery editor of the *Western Christian Advocate*, the chairman of the conference's most important committee, that on slavery.[9]

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[6] *Daily Christian Advocate,* May 2, 11; Chicago *Tribune,* May 7; St. Louis *Christian Advocate,* May 10, 1860.

[7] P[ennell] Coombe, Philadelphia *Daily News,* May 9, 1860.

Dr. Kingsley's committee sat behind closed doors in order, it was asserted, to protect the border from undue excitement.[10] Rumors from the committee and the many caucuses indicated that the majority was "much divided among themselves."[11] Excitement on the question increased, "not only rapidly, but fearfully." Toward the end of the second week the two parties clashed over a technical matter, the composition of the court of appeals, but in the background was the expulsion of five preachers of the Genessee conference, "Nazarites," strong antislavery men who were charged with religious radicalism. The resultant "thunderstorm" "reverberated" through the hall and "lighted up" the whole slavery question.[12]

The day the committee on slavery was ready to report, the conference was torn by brief but violent debates on three resolutions, the most explosive of which called for the establishment of fraternal relations with the southern Methodists. In all of the years of conflict between the two churches, 1859–1860 had been the most bitter. The venom of the religious press had infected the masses of the people and motivated them to violence. Mobs had pulled ministers from their pulpits, closed the doors of churches, and driven northern ministers out of the South. The conservative delegate from Baltimore who moved to establish fraternal relations thought the church ought not let a state of war exist without making some effort to meet or prevent it. A sharp-tongued, hot-headed abolitionist of the New York East Conference, Dr. James Floy, was on his feet at once. He spoke briefly but in an "eloquent and thrilling" manner which caused a "great sensation." It was a strange thing, he said, that we "should fraternize with those who are ready to shed the blood of our brethren." Should the church welcome to its bosom those "who wield the bowie knife, carry on war against us and drag persons out of our pulpits?" He thought it "the most astounding proposition" he had "ever heard in a body of Ministers."[13] On his motion, the resolution was promptly tabled.

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[8] *Northwestern Christian Advocate*, May 16; Coombe, Philadelphia *Daily News*, May 5, 1860.

[9] New York *Tribune*, May 5; *Zion's Herald*, May 16, 1860.

[10] B[enjamin] F. C[rary], Chicago *Press and Tribune*, May 8, 1860.

[11] Coombe, Philadelphia *Daily News*, May 14, 1860.

[12] Coombe, Philadelphia *Daily News*, May 14; *The New York Times*, May 11, 14, 1860; Alfred Brunson, *A Western Pioneer: or Incidents of the Life and Times of Rev. Alfred Brunson* (Cincinnati, 1872), II, 281–284.

[13] C[rary], Chicago *Press and Tribune*, May 19; *Daily Christian Advocate*, May 16, 1860.

With tension thus highly wrought, and before a huge crowd gathered in anticipation of action on the slavery issue, Secretary Harris announced that the committee on slavery was ready and moved that the conference hear its report.

The immense audience, filling every available seat, became oppressively quiet as Calvin Kingsley, chairman of the committee, arose from his chair, slowly ascended the platform, and began to read.[14] The report,[15] invoking the Golden Rule and the opinions of Wesley, stoutly defended the discipline (the constitution of the church) as having always been strongly and definitely antislavery, but regretted that the church, under the pressure of civil legislation, had retreated from its most advanced antislavery position.

The law of the church on slavery was embodied in two sections of the discipline. The "General Rule," a constitutional provision which forbade the buying or selling of slaves, could be amended only by a two-thirds vote of the general conference, with the concurrence of three-fourths of the preachers of the whole denomination. In addition, there was a "chapter" (a bylaw) on enforcement which excluded slave-owning preachers from holding any office in the church and admonished slave-owning laymen to teach their slaves to read the Bible and to allow them to attend services of worship.[16]

The need for present action, the report said, was twofold: First, the general rule ought to be amended; changing conditions had rendered the old statement forbidding "buying and selling" so ambiguous that some interpreted it to sanction *slaveholding*. Second, the "chapter" on enforcement in the discipline, was rendered ineffective among the laymen by the clause making it "conformable to the laws of the State." The report proposed a new chapter, declaring slavery to be "inconsistent" with the Golden Rule and the discipline, and admonishing "all our preachers and people to keep themselves pure from this great evil." The new "chapter" would not, admittedly, be as prohibitory for preachers as was the old.

The minority report followed. Pennell Coombe of the Philadelphia conference, who read it, and S. Y. Monroe of Baltimore, had sat up all night writing the report so that they might present it immediately after the majority statement.[17] Citing the growth of the church in the South before 1844, and since that time along the border, the minority argued that the old "Scriptural Discipline" was sound in its approach both to slaves and their masters. They recognized that the northern majority suffered embarrassing pressure from misrepresentations of "our antislavery positions," and proposed the passage of a resolution which, without altering the discipline, would stoutly reaffirm the "testimony" of the church against the sin of slavery.

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[14] T[homas] M. E[ddy], *Northwestern Christian Advocate,* May 23, 1860.

[15] *Daily Christian Advocate,* May 17, 1860. Further references to this report, unless otherwise noted, are to the same source.

[16] Matlack, pp. 71–72.

[17] Coombe, Philadelphia *Daily News,* May 18; *Daily Christian Advocate,* May 17, 1860.

After a preliminary skirmish, the conference determined to limit speeches on the question to thirty minutes each, and the opening of the debates was set for Wednesday, May 23.

III

In anticipation of the argument on slavery, the galleries of St. James' were crowded on Wednesday with "an eager throng of spectators." It was nearly half-past ten before the conference concluded its routine business and Dr. Kingsley rose to move consideration of his committee's report and adoption of the amendment to the general rule. A man of about forty-five years of age, large of frame, a little awkward, his hair thick and coal-black, his eyes dark and twinkling, his face broad and good humored, he gave the impression of slow-moving amiability until he was thoroughly aroused. The majority, he said, wished to avoid "excitement" and long speeches for a "week or so," and so was willing to take the vote without debate. Ignoring the cries of "argue the question" and "debate," he pointed out that kindness had characterized the deliberations of the committee and expressed the hope that "kind, Christian considerations would characterize all that is done here." There were cries of "amen," from all over the house, and Kingsley took his seat.[18]

It was not spiritual unity only, as the minority clearly saw, that Kingsley and his party would gain by a quick vote. Both parties understood that if the debate were extended, there was less likelihood of a majority victory. Pennell Coombe, refusing to waive his right to the floor, opened the debate. Though he read from manuscript, an unusual practice for a Methodist preacher, he spoke rapidly and loudly, and with much gesticulation. A man of average height, "rather solidly put up," he was an "earnest and impressive speaker," who was "hardly ever anything else but aroused" on the slavery question. His able argument at the General Conference of 1856 had raised him to a place of leadership among the border delegates, and he had the confidence of conservative northerners.[19]

At the outset, obviously referring to the nation's political situation, he condemned the sectional character of the majority proposal. Refuting each argument of the majority report, he pointed out with scorn—and insight—that the report did not reveal the "principal reason" for the majority action. That reason, he said, as stated "in private conversation" is simply this: "the church in the North is called proslavery because of her connection with the border," and it was impossible to "protect her from this charge so long as the book [discipline] does not prohibit the holding of slaves." He regretted this outside pressure, but reminded the majority that they were responsible for it. They were the ones, rather than outsiders, who first charged the border with being proslavery. "They make the charge now," said Coombe, in a dramatic climax; "instead of defending us they assail our character and impeach our integrity." Was it any wonder, then, "that our enemies outside of the church, and thoughtless men within its pale, have repeated and believed these accusations? . . . Is the church on the border to be sacrificed, because these infatuated men have led the people astray?"[20]

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[18] *Daily Christian Advocate*, May 24; *The New York Times*, May 25; *Zion's Herald*, May 23, June 6; *Northwestern Christian Advocate*, May 16, 30, 1860; *Independent*, June 9, 1864.

[19] C[rary], Chicago *Press and Tribune*, May 29; *Northwestern Christian Advocate*, May 30, 1860.

Here the gavel fell and Coombe said that he was sorry for he was not quite done.

Granville Moody of Ohio was on his feet at once to move, magnanimously, that the speaker's time be extended, but Coombe, thanking him for his kindness, sat down. Moody, with characteristic shrewdness, remained on his feet, and when someone from the audience called out, "go ahead," he took a manuscript from his pocket and addressed the chair: "Mr. President, the irrepressible conflict is upon us–the first gun has been fired."[21] Ignoring momentarily the persistent cries of "platform," "platform," he soon yielded and walked down the aisle and up the steps. A giant of a man, six feet four inches in height and "well proportioned," a "ready and strong speaker," he had participated in nearly every issue thus far debated by the conference. It was rumored that he considered himself a candidate for a missionary secretaryship, and some thought him not an unlikely candidate for bishop. He faced the audience, raised his voice to a high key, and at once "plunged into *medias res*." Ignoring Coombe's demand that the debate be not on the evil of slavery but on the merit of the proposed action, he condemned the " 'exceeding sinfulness' of the great system of American slavery" and proceeded to indict it at length on twenty counts. Following the indictment with a statement of paradoxes (a nation "the cradle of liberty and the slave of oppression," and so on), and a series of quotations and classical allusions, he denounced slavery as "a physical curse, an intellectual mildew, a political simoon, a moral pestilence, a stench to creation, the delight of satan, and an abomination to God." In the circumstances, he asked, "are we to be pledged to craven silence when pity's flood of words is burning in our breast?" He spoke "at the top of his lungs, and with great rapidity and, turning, alternately to the left and to the right, he swung his arms in violent gesticulation." Long before he had finished with his manuscript, he was interrupted by the pounding of the gavel. In the confusion it was ascertained that the presiding bishop, doubtless as much distracted by the verbal onslaught as was the audience, had cut him off ten minutes early! He continued for his allotted time, and then, with a final fanfare of martial poetry, sat down, amid cries of

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[20] *Daily Christian Advocate*, May 24, 1860.

[21] *Daily Christian Advocate*, May 24; C[rary], Chicago *Press and Tribune*, May 29; *Zion's Herald*, May 23, 1860.

"vote," "vote," from an audience which was apparently apprehensive of further debate.

It was, without doubt, an act of personal aggrandizement if not buffoonery. The bitterly hostile editor of the Baltimore *Christian Advocate* characterized it as a "flash of comedy, which must have been inspired by the place—a theater. . . ."[22] The several northern *Christian Advocates* charitably overlooked it save to condemn in general those who read manuscripts having no bearing on the question. Technically, the speech was irrelevant. Both the extremists of the North and the moderates of the border abjured the evil of slavery. The majority scarcely hoped for constitutional change, and its new chapter would not purge the church of slavery. But Moody's speech inflamed the passions of those who could forbear laughter; it might strengthen the majority's argument for constitutional change. It had to be answered again and again.

A member of the Baltimore Conference, deploring the "tirade" of the preceding speaker and arguing that the function of the church was "Wesleyanism" (the salvation of souls), and not general agitation and interference in political affairs, gave the final speech of the first day of the debate.[23] "The minority," said *The New York Times*, which was friendly to the majority, "had decidedly the best of the argument today," not merely because the conservatives had two out of the three speeches, but from the fact that they "spoke directly to the point."[24]

The galleries were crowded again the next morning when John P. Durbin, the highly respected missionary secretary of the church, and a member of the Philadelphia Conference, obtained the floor to present a substitute motion. Of medium height and "rather spare," with thin gray hair and slightly stooping form, he had a deep-toned and sonorous voice which gave great solemnity and impressiveness to his preaching.[25] An elder statesman and conservative, he was yet one who had, in behalf of the North, pitted himself against the South and the imperious Bishop Soule in the General Conference of 1844.

His substitute accepted the preamble of the majority report but proposed, in lieu of changes in the discipline, to adopt two resolutions, one calling for stricter enforcement of the discipline on slavery, the other for "great moderation . . . in the public discussion of this subject . . ."

Pleading that the church not be divided again, he argued that the only way to improve the legal status of the slave was to influence the legislatures. "Do you not see," he asked, "how important it is to have half a million of people on the soil of slavery taught these antislavery principles . . . ?" The "testimony" of the church, he said, was not enough. It might be heard in

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[22] Baltimore *Conference Journal*, n.d., in St. Louis *Christian Advocate*, June 7, 14, 1860.

[23] *Daily Christian Advocate*, May 24, 1860.

[24] May 25, 1860.

[25] *Independent*, May 17, 1860.

New York, Boston, Philadelphia, "but who hears it in the habitation of the slaves?" He praised the men of the border for upholding the church's antislavery standard while they adhered to the laws of the state. The latter virtue he lauded in a burst of chauvinistic oratory: "As a citizen I have my opinion of the duty of maintaining the authority of the government, and if I were President of the United States, and any attempts were to be made, either North or South, to dissolve the Union, if there were ships enough, and men, and cannon, and powder, and ball enough, I would whip them in." There was tremendous applause and the chair rapped for order.[26]

Without further debate and in the midst of intense excitement the presiding bishop polled the conference on the substitute motion. The majority laid the measure on the table, 135 to 85, but, as observers had predicted, by a vote considerably short of the two-thirds necessary to change the general rule.[27] Happy with the result, Pennell Coombe, minority leader, believed that neither the general rule nor the chapter would be changed.[28]

The debates continued on Friday, Monday, and Tuesday, before the vote on the question was taken. From two to four speakers, representing about equally the majority and the minority, spoke on each of the days.

The position of the majority was difficult to sustain. It was not simply the existence of slavery in the church which concerned many of the northern men; they could countenance the institution as a necessity imposed upon them by the state were it not for the criticism from without and the agitation within. Their need was not for the amendment, but for any "advanced" action which, being opposed by the border, could be interpreted as antislavery. In a series of caucuses they had agreed to take a vote whenever the minority was ready—until that time, recognizing the potency of debate in public opinion, they would match speech for speech, "gun for gun."[29] They would be pleased to change the general rule, but, as Dr. Erastus O. Haven, editor of *Zion's Herald*, had already written to his Boston readers, they did not expect to get the requisite two-thirds vote, and anyway they would be well "satisfied" with the new "chapter."[30] Their arguments, in these circumstances, were scarcely designed to persuade. With the exception of one or two impassioned appeals, they did not speak strictly to the question and seemed, therefore, even to the friendly northern press, to lack the conviction and eloquence of the minority speeches.

The chief argument of the majority, despite the minority's attempt to rule it irrelevant, was the evil of slavery, especially, as Dr. E. M. Thomson, president of Ohio Wesleyan University, argued in a "bitter" speech,[31] the problem of slave breeding for the market. "A small, spare man, with a sallow and bloodless countenance," Dr. Thomson was "a decidedly-good debater" noted more for "the clearness of his views" than for his manner.[32] The border, said Thomson, "is the slaveholding region. Go into the streets of New Orleans and you will see here and there the sign, 'Maryland and Virginia negroes for sale.' " And the slaves on the plantations of the far South who "once enjoyed the ministry of such men as our friends Slicer and Wilson of the East Baltimore and Baltimore conferences . . . are they whose ankles and chains most gall." "It is the border," he argued, "that advertises runaway slaves, and pursues fugitives." And border members of the Methodist Episcopal Church held, he estimated, some 38,000 slaves.[33] He had nothing to say, however, about how effective a remedy the majority proposal would be.

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[26] *Daily Christian Advocate*, May 25, 1860.
[27] *Daily Christian Advocate*, May 25; New York *Times*, May 26, 1860.
[28] Coombe, Philadelphia *Daily News*, May 28, 1860.
[29] *The New York Times*, May 26, 1860.
[30] May 23, 1860. The letter was written May 16.
[31] Nashville *Christian Advocate*, June 14, 1860.

The sharpest words came from one of the younger men, R. M. Hatfield, of New York. An occasional correspondent for the New York *Independent*, he had attained some reputation for learning, even though he was not a college man. One of the few full-bearded men of the conference, he made a striking appearance, and when he spoke he proved himself a "remarkably vehement and emphatic" debater, and a man "thoroughly convinced of the invulnerable truth of his positions . . ." No man in the conference was "more attentively heard."[34] His speech created a "great sensation," so much so that the editors prudently omitted a part of it in the publication.[35] He denounced the church for "mousing around among politicians to find out what to do . . ." He denounced the border for ruling out the argument on slavery and apologizing for slaveholders. "From all such," he demanded, "good Lord, deliver us." Greeted with applause and exclamations of "Amen, Amen," he continued, "What is American Slavery, [but] a system of robbery . . . ? Sir, which is the wickedest form of perpetuating slavery; engaging in the slave-trade, and going to Africa and kidnapping men and women there, or robbing cradles?"[36]

Dr. B. F. Crary, the youngish president of Minnesota's Hamline University, garbed in a "martial-looking" cloak, an "excellent hater, who saw only black and white with no intermediary shadings," one who would "rather die than . . . give up a principle," thought the quarrel "no sectional controversy," but "a part of the grand battle between virtue and vice, right and wrong, liberty and slavery."[37] Like the others, he made no effort to equate the new legislation with the *abolition* of slavery.

Editorially, the New York *Tribune* thought that, aside from slaveholding and slave-breeding, one other argument of the majority, repeated by nearly every speaker, had "great force":[38] that the border Methodists had so changed their position on slavery (a "retrogression," said Dr. Crary, both "rapid and mortifying"[39]) that it was necessary for the church to make a "corresponding demonstration." Once the ablest statesmen were antislavery, said Dr. Thomson, in arguing the point, and churches had preached against the great evil. Now the time had come when senators and governors advocated the reopening of the slave trade, the southern Methodists held slavery a "divine institution," and Methodists of the border had petitioned the General Conference to strike all reference to slavery from the discipline. Small wonder, he cried out, that northern states are "alarmed for themselves" and that "forty thousand petitioners are at your doors."[40]

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[32] *Independent*, May 10, 1860.

[33] *Daily Christian Advocate*, May 26, 1860.

[34] *Independent*, May 24; *Northwestern Christian Advocate*, May 30, 1860.

[35] This charge of deletion was made by Henry Slicer of Maryland, speaking for the minority (*Daily Christian Advocate*, June 1, 1860).

[36] *Daily Christian Advocate*, May 30, 1860.

[37] *Northwestern Christian Advocate*, May 30; *Daily Christian Advocate*, May 29, 1860.

To one other matter the majority speakers gave considerable attention: the argument of the minority, both in the report and in supporting speeches, that the new rule would create an intolerable situation on the border, pitting church against state, causing agitation and unrest, and even secession. Slavery, not abolition, said Thomson, in answer to this argument, is "the disturber" and "spoiler of churches." If the action is right, he argued (without any very close analysis of what the action really was), "we owe it to ourselves, to God, to our country, and our brethren . . . we cannot fellowship any man who chattelizes a human being."[41] Crary, in a dramatic moment, declared that he was not afraid of dividing the church, that he would not hesitate in order "to keep a few mercenary slaveholders." "Who will go away," he asked, "and where will they go? . . . to the South? The Durbins, and the Coombes, and the Slicers of the church go to the South! Who believes it?" Coombe, interrupting, shouted "Nobody," and Durbin cried out, "Let us stay with you." Crary had an easy answer for the border laws against manumission: the master need only say, when the slave was old enough to fend for himself, "Now, my boy, you want to be free. That is the way to the North Star, and there is five dollars, Go!"[42]

Delegates of the border were motivated, not chiefly by fear of criticism, but by what they believed would be certain and imminent disintegration if the majority report were adopted. They therefore entered the debate with a vigor and personal appeal which even the northern press conceded did not characterize the speakers for the majority.

They opposed the change in the rule upon two principal issues: first, that the policy of the fathers as set forth in the discipline was right, and therefore, ought not to be changed; and second, that the action proposed by the majority would inflict upon the border a penalty which it did not merit and could not bear.

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[38] May 28, 1860.
[39] *Daily Christian Advocate*, May 29, 1860.
[40] *Daily Christian Advocate*, May 26, 1860.
[41] *Daily Christian Advocate*, May 26, 1860.
[42] *Daily Christian Advocate*, May 29, 1860.

In defending the fathers, nearly every speaker of the minority denied the imputation that the border was proslavery. James L. Crane, a young conservative from Illinois, striking directly and unmistakably at Granville Moody as "one brother" who had "in a sort of spread-eagle style . . . amplified on the evils of slavery," pointed out that had Moody spoken for the *minority*, "it would have applied as well."[43] Gordon Battelle of western Virginia, a huge man with a stentorian voice, and hardly a year later a political figure in the formation of the new state of West Virginia, was even more blunt. No one doubts that slavery is evil, he said, "but what has all that to do with the expediency of this proposed rule?" He went abruptly and effectively to the heart of the question. The new rule, he said, is just as ambiguous as the old one, a mere "paper" law, which, even the majority admits, "would not free a single slave . . . would not break a single shackle." He derided the majority: "Do you intend as your real purpose to bind together a *sentiment* for some far away people to smell at?"[44]

Much of the minority argument, like that of the majority, was an appeal to tradition. The "best way," said Crane, "is the old Methodistic way." "Father" Alfred Griffiths of Baltimore, the oldest member of the conference, and one of the delegates of 1844 who had helped lead the fight against Bishop Andrew, holding up a copy of the discipline, exclaimed, "My position . . . is found in this book which is the work of our fathers . . . I go for the Discipline as it is . . ." For thirty minutes he extolled the church and its founders, and then—on a motion of Secretary Harris, who, in a display of magnanimity thought that, in respect to his age, Father Griffiths ought to be permitted to speak "as long as he wanted to"—he talked for another half hour.[45]

The minority was also concerned with practical results, however. The only effective antislavery work done by the church, they argued, had been done on the border, in vindication of the discipline and the policy of the fathers. E. Y. Monroe of New Jersey, in a speech which Pennell Coombe reported to the Philadelphia *Daily News*[46] as the best of the debate, cleverly seized the data of Kingsley's report to prove his point. The majority, he said, had cited two experiences of the church with slavery—the one "prohibitory and unsuccessful," abandoned in six months; the other experiment, seventy-six years under the discipline, even the majority report praised for setting free thousands of slaves.[47] T. C. Murphy, a free-stater who had recently been transferred to slave territory, and member of a family which had never been "connected" with slavery, praised the border Methodists for coming between the "trader and his victim." The few thousand Methodists on the border, he believed, had done more to ameliorate slavery than the one million Methodists in the free states.[48] Gordon Battelle, from his essentially nonslaveholding section of western Virginia, could speak more effectively in defense of the policy. In his conference of 22,000 members, he said, there were not more than 50 slaveholders; in his district of 4000 members he knew but four "nominal" slaveholders; and of the 1000 Methodists in his own city of Wheeling there was not a single one who owned slaves. The rule of the discipline is not always easy to administer, he pointed out, in laying the premise for a very shrewd attack upon that section of the church which, through its business "operations," was rapidly increasing in wealth. "Has the North ever brought to trial a *single* offender against another general rule of the Discipline," he asked, "which forbids the 'laying up treasure upon the earth?' " The evil has, he said, "its root in precisely the same soil with sinful slaveholding . . ."[49]

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[43] *Daily Christian Advocate*, May 26, 1860.
[44] *Daily Christian Advocate*, May 29, 1860.
[45] *Daily Christian Advocate*, May 26, 1860.
[46] May 29, 1860.
[47] *Daily Christian Advocate*, May 29, 1860.

A policy in accord with the discipline and with antislavery in its principles —which had freed thousands of slaves and ameliorated the condition and saved the souls of thousands of others—a policy which at the General Conference of 1848 had received the hearty endorsement of the North, including New England, surely was right. If so, how wrong it was, how diabolical, to stir up strife on the border. Father Griffiths, to many cries of "No! No!" from the delegates, accused the majority of a "fixed purpose to exscind us or to drive us to extremities." Praying God to "rebuke" this "unhappy agitation," he warned that the final settlement would be "in blood and the rending asunder of this fairest and best government upon which the light of the sun ever shone."[50]

The minority offered little by way of solution. The only real problem was agitation. Let the majority, therefore, abide by the Golden Rule which it had so warmly espoused in the report. The border, if left alone with the discipline and the gospel of salvation, would be able to deal with slavery. The "moral power" of Christianity, said one of the speakers, like the action of the sun on the millions of tons of ice on Lake Erie, would dissolve the bonds "of many a slave."[51]

On Tuesday, May 29, the conference voted to close the debates and ordered the yeas and nays. Over a period of one week the delegates had listened to fourteen speeches on the question, eight of them in opposition. The final tabulation of the vote, 138 for and 74 against, was short of the two-thirds majority required for passage of the amendment to the general rule.[52]

Calvin Kingsley at once moved the adoption of the new chapter, requiring only a majority vote. Discussion was, however, laid over until the following day.

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[48] *Daily Christian Advocate*, May 26, 1860.

[49] *Daily Christian Advocate*, May 30, 1860.

[50] *Daily Christian Advocate*, May 26, 1860.

[51] Henry Slicer, *Daily Christian Advocate*, June 1, 1860.

[52] *Daily Christian Advocate*, May 30, 1860.

In the meantime, in an extra session held on Monday afternoon, the conference had elected the editors, book agents, and other officers of the General Conference. The progressives made a clean sweep, electing, among others, Calvin Kingsley to the editorship of the important *Western Christian Advocate* at Cincinnati, and the radical Edward Thomson to the *Christian Advocate and Journal*, the church paper most widely circulated on the border. To the new office of assistant missionary secretary, to which Granville Moody had aspired, they elected W. L. Harris, secretary of the General Conference and an aggressive abolitionist.

The results of the election were not unexpected, and the minority found hope, in the "good feeling" which prevailed among the majority, that "some proper arrangement" on the slavery question might yet be made.[53] Such hope quickly flagged. Northern men from the conservative conferences, who had feared that the change in the general rule would disturb the unity of the church, now felt safe. The new "chapter" was less radical. It might vex the border men, but it should cause no division. Some advanced action on slavery was necessary to the North. Moreover, the conference had been in session a month, the vote on the major issue had been taken, and men were anxious to adjourn and get home. Some of those who had refused to vote for the change in the general rule, but who were willing to vote for the new chapter, threatened the border that they would change their vote on the rule if there were any "protracted resistance" to the chapter. Much discouraged, Coombe predicted that the chapter would be approved and that the border would form a Central Methodist Church.[54]

For the most part the speeches on the chapter merely continued the discussion of issues already debated. The minority objected to the ambiguity of the new chapter: it either attempted to proscribe slaveholding, and was therefore unconstitutional, or it was only an admonition, weaker than the statement in the discipline, and therefore "insufficient, inexpressive, and good for nothing."[55] Pennell Coombe, availing himself of the opportunity to speak again because of the new motion, "utterly" denied the charge that Methodists were guilty of slave-breeding and challenged Thomson's estimate of 38,000 slaves held by Methodists; there were not, in his opinion, half that number. "What must be thought," he shouted, without attempting to authenticate his own estimate, "of the judgment of a man who cannot guess within twenty thousand of the truth?"[56]

The most able speech for the minority, and the most eloquent in the whole course of the debates, was delivered by Thomas Sewall of Baltimore. A "natural born orator," with a melodious voice and effective action, he spoke

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[53] Coombe, Philadelphia *Daily News,* May 31, 1860.

[54] Coombe, Philadelphia *Daily News,* June 1, 1860.

[55] Dr. Joseph Holdich, Financial Secretary of the American Bible Society and Delegate, *Daily Christian Advocate,* June 2, 1860.

[56] *Daily Christian Advocate,* June 2, 1860.

"amidst profound attention."[57] Beginning "Sir, we are too near the rocks for a protracted speech, and all that is becoming me is the short, sharp utterances which we hear from a deck when the lee shore is near," he developed but a single point: "*The Border cannot bear this action.*"[58] Striking at the tenderest sentiment of a Methodist itinerant, and opening up the deepest springs of an emotional religion, he spoke of the "endearing relations between the preacher and his people," the people who "first permitted him to exhort and preach, and bore with his infirmities when he knew so little but meant so well." "You have stood with them," he said, "in their repentance, and then have stood on the mountain of transfiguration, and shouted with their joy." It was an experience which every Methodist preacher knew and cherished. "You will not think it strange," he continued, "that I stand here to-day, and say, Don't smite them; spare my people. Do not smite."

Citing, as others had done, the debt of the church to the Baltimore Conference, he did not plead for justice. Rather, he entered a moving bit of declamation. His face pale, his voice rich and full, he quickly moved the great multitude of people to tears.[59] His father, he said, knew and loved Jesse Lee, the Baltimorean who had planted the Methodist Church in New England. "I thank God," he cried, "that our title goes right through Jesse Lee to Asbury [the father of Methodism in America], and through Asbury to John Wesley, and through John Wesley to the throne of God; there is a succession which should be ever perpetuated. Break not the golden links [sensation and cheers], but let the chain ever bind us in one great brotherhood of feeling and work."

For a brief interval the speech wrought the disparate forces together in a sympathetic appreciation of the religious experience which underlay Methodism, but the sentiment was too fragile to withstand the divisiveness of opinion and debate.

On Thursday, after the conference had heard seven speakers, ostensibly on the chapter, a northern delegate obtained the floor to move, with Coombe's approval, that the debate be closed after final speeches by William Hunter of the Western Virginia Conference for the minority and Calvin Kingsley for the majority. The motion prevailed.

Dr. Hunter, a professor of Hebrew and Biblical literature at Allegheny College, and former conservative editor of the Pittsburgh *Christian Advocate*, gave a moderate and able argument, but his speech, entered at the climax of the debates, lacked the emotional force of Sewall or Coombe or Thomson. He thundered no denunciation of men or of their arguments, he uttered no solemn threats of disunion, and he launched into no flights of declamation.

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[57] Coombe, Philadelphia *Daily News*, May 31, 1860.

[58] The speech was reported in the *Daily Christian Advocate*, June 4, 1860. This analysis is suggested by Coombe, Philadelphia *Daily News*, May 31, 1860.

[59] *Northwestern Christian Advocate*, June 6, 1860.

In consequence, he proved, in the estimation of the conference, no match for Kingsley's "masterly" and "unanswerable" argument.[60]

Kingsley spoke at a critical moment in the debates. Sewall was still unanswered, and Durbin's substitute, or a similar resolution–action that could be labelled antislavery–might yet sweep the conference and defeat the intent of the progressives. Brushing aside Hunter's inconsequential speech, he turned to Sewall, whose eloquence had touched his heart and moved his eyes to tears. Pointing out that "others besides the border have suffered," he declared that the losses in the North from withdrawing abolitionists had already exceeded the total membership south of the Mason-Dixon line.[61]

The "fierce and terrible thing" which the majority proposed he said, was simply "moral suasion." He challenged any man to stand and declare that he did not believe "buying, selling, or holding of human beings as chattels, is contrary to the laws of God and nature, inconsistent with the Golden Rule, and . . . our Discipline." "I would like, sir," he said, "to look him in the eye, as he says this . . ." Having thus laid down a moderate interpretation of the chapter, and fortified it with a dramatic challenge, he proceeded, using ridicule as his chief weapon, to show that the minority objections were grossly exaggerated and that the new chapter really represented no radical change, merely embodying the sentiments which the church had long held.

Dr. Durbin, perceiving the importance of this interpretation to the border, and wanting to make it unequivocal, interrupted to ask if the speaker were saying that the new chapter "does not lay the foundation of any disciplinary action against any parties who are known to be slaveholders?"[62]

Kingsley's answer was evasive, but highly satisfactory to a large percentage of the border delegates. The chapter, he said, is "just what it claims to be, a declaration of sentiment and an affectionate advice, but [it is] not . . . statutory."

After the minority attempted, unsuccessfully, to recall Durbin's substitute, the conference approved the new chapter by a vote of 155 to 58.[63] The delegates, in support of Kingsley's interpretation, then adopted a resolution declaring the new chapter to be "advisory in practice . . . and not statutory in its nature." Thomas Morris, the presiding bishop, asked if the conference was done with the question. The delegates answered in the affirmative and the bishop called out, bringing down his gavel, "So let it rest, world without end." Amens resounded all over the hall.[64]

The debates were thus concluded. The editorial commentators generally regarded them as inferior to the arguments of 1856 or 1844, and one writer thought that not "a single vote was changed by the whole of them." Many of the leading men of the majority had not entered the lists, some of the speeches were irrelevant, and others, having seen service on earlier occasions, had "like lime . . . lost their pungency."[65]

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[60] *Northwestern Christian Advocate,* June 6, 1860.
[61] *Daily Christian Advocate,* June 2, 1860.
[62] *Daily Christian Advocate,* June 2, 1860.
[63] *Daily Christian Advocate,* June 1, 1860.
[64] *Daily Christian Advocate,* June 2, 1860.

Debate is not often a decisive factor in the action of a legislative body when the question at issue has ripened through a long period into party strife. More important is the working out in caucus, or extra-legislative discussion, of a formula which is acceptable to the majority. The progressives, confident that they could compel "advanced" action, did not rely upon debate to win support, but to prevent defection from the ranks and to provide a reasonably favorable press.

The debates were much more important to the minority, as events subsequently revealed. The frequent expression of fear that disaster would overtake the border, the acid comments of some of the speakers about the sincerity of the North, and the eloquent plea of Thomas Sewall, provoked Kingsley to offer a mild interpretation of the chapter, and prompted the conference to declare the action as "advisory only," concessions which later proved invaluable aids to persuasion and pacification of the border.

IV

The meanings given to the new chapter, after the conference, were even more varied than those assigned to it during the debates. Pennell Coombe, whose rising or falling spirits reflected the climate of opinion on the question, wrote to the Philadelphia *Daily Press* immediately after the passage of the measure that "the Church will now have peace on the border." "We have," he wrote, "less law but more sentiment."[66]

Most of the *Christian Advocate* papers thought the discipline strengthened in respect to its rule on slavery, but William Lloyd Garrison's *Liberator* taunted the New England Methodists with their failure to prohibit slaveholding in the church,[67] and the St. Louis *Christian Advocate* of the southern Methodists ironically pointed out that the northern church could now legally elect a slaveholding bishop.[68] The new chapter was very nearly ambiguous enough to meet the needs of both extremes.

All might have gone well for the union of the church had it not been for the course of Dr. Thomas Bond, bellicose editor of the Baltimore *Christian Advocate*. He found the new chapter to be "artfully constructed." "The barb," he wrote, "is carefully covered by the bait, but a moment's examination bares the steel." The old law called slavery a "great evil," but the new law called it "a sin," and *sin* was punishable under the rules of the discipline, no matter what "interpretation" northern members might temporarily give to the new chapter. No honest man of the border could continue to serve under the new legislation.[69] Urged by Dr. Bond, laymen of Baltimore met in June and resolved not to obey the new legislation, and in September the preachers of Washington, D.C., lodged a formal complaint against the new chapter. In December laymen of four border annual conferences assembled at Baltimore to demand withdrawal from the Methodist Episcopal Church.

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[65] "Manhattan," *Western Christian Advocate,* June 13, 1860.

[66] June 5, 6, 1860.

[67] July 27, 1860, letter from D. M. Allen; Feb. 1, 1861, letter signed C. K. W. A controversy on whether or not the Methodist Episcopal Church was proslavery was carried on in several issues of the Boston *Liberator:* Mar. 1, Mar. 29, Apr. 5, 1861.

[68] June 14, 1860.

In the meantime, however, the union men had been hard at work. John Lanahan, of Baltimore, charging Bond with plotting to take the Baltimore Conference into the southern church, conducted an intensive campaign among the preachers.[70] A presiding elder, arguing that the new legislation was mild in nature, succeeded in blocking the extra session of the Baltimore Conference demanded by Bond and, although he could not prevent the call of the laymen's convention, he induced his churches to send conservative delegates.[71] Gordon Battelle decried the action of the General Conference, but wrote that western Virginia would not go South, that he, for one, would not "stamp with folly" the "toils and solemn professions" of the past sixteen years.[72] A timid preacher of Baltimore, unwilling to speak out on the subject, confided to Bishop Matthew Simpson[73] that he would not leave the church, and even Thomas Sewall, eloquent defender of the border at the General Conference, after wavering in his loyalty, at last stayed with the North.

When the Baltimore and East Baltimore Conferences met at their annual sessions in March of 1861 they were torn and bitter with strife. Both demanded that the General Conference repeal the new chapter, but, while breathing threats of violence to the church, remained within its jurisdiction. The Baltimore Conference, dominated by Virginia preachers, angrily repudiated the new chapter, but Maryland preachers did not participate in the dramatic vote, and all of them, Virginians and Marylanders alike, accepted appointments at the hands of the bishop and postponed the question of division until the following year.[74]

When, in the spring of 1861, events forced the citizens of the Border States—Maryland and western Virginia, and to a lesser degree Kentucky and Missouri—to face the issue of secession from the federal Union, thousands of them, members of the Methodist Episcopal Church, had already made up their minds on the corresponding ecclesiastical issue. Proud of their loyalty to the federal government, border Methodists boasted that their influence on

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[69] June 9, in Nashville *Christian Advocate*, June 21, 1860.

[70] Lanahan to Simpson, Mar. 29, 1861 (Bishop Matthew Simpson Papers, Library of Congress).

[71] L. F. Morgan to Simpson, Sept. 6, Oct. 10, 1860 (Simpson Papers).

[72] Morgan to Simpson, Sept. 6, 1860 (Simpson Papers).

[73] William Hirst to Simpson, Feb. 4, 1861 (Simpson Papers).

[74] William Warren Sweet, *The Methodist Episcopal Church and the Civil War* (Cincinnati, 1912), pp. 47–51; Charles Baumer Swaney, *Episcopal Methodism and Slavery* (Boston, 1926), pp. 228–231.

Governor John Hicks, himself a Methodist, helped to keep Maryland in the Union.[75] The lawyers and politicians of Baltimore were for secession, wrote a correspondent to the Cincinnati *Commercial*, but the Methodists and mechanics of the city were "almost to a man for the Union."[76] Out in Wheeling, Virginia, the strongholds of Union sentiment were identical with the strongholds of the Methodist Episcopal Church, and Gordon Battelle, as a member of the constitutional convention which gave birth to the state of West Virginia, was the delegate who introduced a resolution to outlaw slavery in the new commonwealth.[77]

The mild interpretation of the new chapter, wrought out of the debates of the general conference, made possible the continued unity of the church and, in the critical spring months of 1861, strengthened the sentiment for political union in the strongly Methodistic Border States.

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[75] Sweet, pp. 49, 51.

[76] Sweet, p. 51; James Ford Rhodes, *History of the United States from the Compromise of 1850* (New York, 1904), III, 301.

[77] Sweet, p. 49.

The Democratic Conventions of 1860

LINDSEY S. PERKINS

11

On a pleasant day in April, 1860, a gentleman from Indiana met a gentleman from Mississippi in the neighborhood of Social Circle, Georgia, on a train meandering toward Charleston, South Carolina. An altercation immediately began on the abilities and liabilities of Stephen A. Douglas, leading candidate for the Democratic party's nomination to the presidency. Warming quickly to the point where they had either to bet or to fight, the gentlemen wagered $1000 on Douglas's chances of being elected *if* nominated.

These gamecocks were en route to the first session of the Democratic National Convention of 1860, which was opening in Charleston on April 23. They were possibly more agitated than their fellow laymen at home, for they were delegates to the convention and they represented two bitterly opposed factions, the Douglasites and the fire-eaters.[1]

I

Primarily, this body faced the task of nominating a presidential candidate and preparing a platform which would suit delegates set at loggerheads by issues then riving the nation. Of candidates there were plenty and to spare. Douglas had come close at the Cincinnati Convention in 1856, and he was stronger this time. Vice-President John Breckinridge had made his bid in Frankfort, Kentucky, on December 21, 1859,[2] with a speech praising the Dred Scott decision. There were governors, such as amiable Joe Lane of Oregon, and cabinet officers, such as Howell Cobb. Likewise, "the old fogies in the Senate are all candidates for the Presidency from highest to lowest, and are as silent, sanctimonious and demure as a wh . . e at a christening."[3]

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[1] Murat Halstead, *Caucuses of 1860: A History of the National Political Conventions of the Current Presidential Campaign* (Columbus, Ohio, 1860), pp. 2–3.

[2] For varied comment, see Cincinnati *Daily Gazette*, Jan. 2, 1860, and Washington *Constitution*, Dec. 23, 1859.

[3] Robert Toombs to Alexander H. Stephens, Dec. 26, 1859 (*The Correspondence of*

Douglas' opponents agreed on nothing except their implacable hatred for him. Before the convention opened, they held several meetings and "failed to accomplish anything except their incapacity to come together."[4]

In several respects, Charleston was not the best locale for a national gathering. The city, with strong traditions and mores, was an exemplar of the true and beautiful to the Southerner, but it was foreign territory to the average freesoiler. Life moved at the pace of established leisure, with commerce enough to supply the wants of Carolina. The wide-porched homes of those who mattered provided uniquely gracious hospitality to visitors who mattered, hospitality made the more impressive by English plate, Belgian crystal, and French mahogany.

Charleston was prepared for the convention only in the matter of hiking rates. Accommodations were woefully limited. The city was not large enough. Its hostelries could handle the emergencies of planters gathering for the German, but not much more. The Southerners and their friends had appropriated the spacious Charleston House, and many of them were welcomed into private homes. The Douglas men took the less pretentious Mills House and set up a dormitory on the second floor of the Hibernian Hall, with close-packed cots and makeshift dressing tables.

Institute Hall of Charleston College was set aside for the sessions. This rectangular hall had supporting pillars only for the side galleries; there were two banks of these, with the lower extending back only half the length of the hall.

> The floor is perfectly level, and the seats are all old-fashioned, wooden-bottomed chairs . . . which are now being screwed by the half-dozen to pine planks placed across the bottom. . . . The principal effort in art is immediately over the stage. Three highly colored but very improperly dressed females are there engaged. One seems to be contemplating matters and things in general. Another is mixing colors with the apparent intention of painting something. The other is pointing with what seems to be a common bowie-knife, to a globe. . . . It may be held to be according to the proprieties, that the continent which is outlined most conspicuously on this globe is marked "Africa."[5]

The accoustics were fair, but the roar of wagon wheels on Market Street made hearing difficult until the cobblestones were muffled with sand. For the eighteen hundred it was designed to hold, the hall was large and well ventilated; but visitors began sending their admission tickets out to friends until the place was jammed with some three thousand people. The total discomfort was augmented by a hundred-degree heat wave for the first four days and cold, rainy weather for the next three.[6]

Robert Toombs, Alexander H. Stephens, and Howell Cobb, Ulrich B. Phillips, ed., American Historical Association, *Annual Report,* 1911 [Washington, 1913], II, 452).

[4] Halstead, p. 8.

[5] Halstead, pp. 4–5.

[6] New York *Tribune,* April 23, 1860; Halstead, p. 31.

Into this setting moved the varied horde which provided the convention with much of its immediate audience. In addition to the more than six hundred delegates, noted one journalist, there were the managers and wire-pullers: "Great portly fellows, with protuberant stomachs and puffy cheeks . . . dressed in glossy black and fine linen, with the latest style of stove-pipe hats, and ponderous gold-headed canes—perspiring and smoking, and engaged in mysterious conversations, concerning caucus stratagems." At first the audience included the hangers-on: the beady-eyed, quick little men, there to rub shoulders with senators, to open beer for New Yorkers and bourbon for Kentuckians, to return home and say, "I was to Charleston." They made the Mills House "as lively as a molasses barrel with flies"[7]—an apt simile, in more ways than one, for this pack was motivated by the turn of the molasses tap in most matters, including the response to speeches. But the money passed down the drain of high rates and faro games; the liquor ran out; and these auxiliaries (mostly from the North and West) were forced to return home. Thus, especially on the fateful, disruptive seventh day, the galleries were left to Charlestonians.

Charleston was of the slave-owning aristocracy, heart and soul. In 1851 there was published at Camden, South Carolina, a weekly called *Southern Rights* and devoted to "literature, religion, science, art, and Southern Rights."[8] Contrary to snap judgment, this subtitle was the epitome of unity; for in South Carolina's tidewater, southern rights amounted to a science and a religion, to be promoted and defended by literature and the rest of the arts. Tidewater ladies and gentlemen formed most of the southern observers, a growing and increasingly vociferous majority as the convention ran its course.

The spectators were steadfast factionalists; and the generality of the remaining auditors, the delegates themselves, were that and more so, with a finely honed competitive edge that precluded constructive accomplishment. A broad or cursory view does not reveal this; it gives a deceptive impression of fluidity, which did not in fact exist.[9]

The Douglas aggregation made up the largest bloc. On the face of it, Douglas was a national man. The Middle Border (the Northwest of that time) was mostly for him, and he had many pledges from the slave-owning South and more from the freesoil East. The total represented a strong majority committed to the senator from Illinois, but not united upon the degree of support it should give him.

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[7] Halstead, p. 7.

[8] Ulrich B. Phillips, *The Course of the South to Secession* (New York, 1939), p. 136.

[9] For the delegates and their characteristics, see, *passim:* Halstead; Phillips; Dwight L. Dumond, *The Secession Movement, 1860–1861* (New York, 1931); Emerson D. Fite, *The Presidential Campaign of 1860* (New York, 1911); Roy F. Nichols, *The Disruption of American Democracy* (New York, 1948); Clarence C. Norton, *The Democratic Party in Ante-Bellum North Carolina, 1845–1861* (Chapel Hill, N.C., 1930); Robert R. Russell, "Economic Aspects of Southern Sectionalism, 1840–1861," *Univ. of Illinois Studies in the Social Sciences*, XI (1923), nos. 1, 2; Oliver P. Temple, *Notable Men of Tennessee from 1833 to 1875* (New York, 1912); Austin L. Venable, "The Conflict Between the Douglas and the Yancey Forces in the Charleston Convention," *Jour. of Southern History*, VIII (1942), 226–241; *Cong. Globe*, 36th Cong., 1st Sess.; and *Proceedings of the Conventions at Charleston and Baltimore* (Washington, 1860) (hereafter cited as *Proceedings*).

However, there was a hard core in this constituency, a bloc within a bloc. This was that body of partisans, the Douglasites, which was absolute in its determination. The Douglasites pivoted on an impressive band of career politicians: Augustus C. Dodge, ex-governor of Iowa; W. A. Richardson, ex-congressman defeated in the gubernatorial race, and Representative S. S. Marshall, both from Illinois; Charles E. Stuart, ex-senator, Michigan; Representative J. B. Foley, Indiana; and from Ohio, David Todd, ex-governor, J. B. Steedman, House printer, Henry B. Payne, defeated for the governorship by Salmon P. Chase, and Senator George E. Pugh. These politicians had been beaten or feared a beating; and they bore in mind that the comparative innocuousness of their popular sovereignty doctrine, designed to lend slavery some aid, had not saved them from the Republicans.[10] Generally, Douglas' supporters were known as compromisers. Men wondered if they would fight for principle—indeed, if they really had principles. The Douglasites had at least one principle: they intended to nominate their man, come hell or high water. Now Douglas had a good majority, but the Douglasites fell just short of this mark.[11]

The deputations from the slave regions were not united as to program, but there was a high degree of homogeneity apart from area loyalties. Some held office, but few would have considered politics as a career; the entire section could hardly muster as much weight-by-office as could Ohio and Delaware. These gentlemen were mostly planters, editors, lawyers. Nearly all were men of wealth and breeding.[12] They thought of themselves as aristocracy, a term which their opponents had gleefully twisted into the coinage, "slavocracy."

There was a hard core in the Deep South, too. These partisans called themselves the True Southrons, and they were dubbed Ultra-Southerners or fire-eaters, the latter names underscoring their reputation. Headed by William L. Yancey of Alabama, they were believed to be headstrong, rash men. A small minority of perhaps forty votes from the Gulf States and Arkansas, they were nevertheless the heartwood of the slavocracy, made dangerous by strong leadership and strong convictions. They saw the nominal promise of popular sovereignty overridden by facts: Kansas had been lost to slavery, and a John Brown could cross from Kansas all the way to Virginia. In the opinion of these Ultras, the South was up to its neck in high water and hell had arrived. They strode in and handed over the Alabama Resolutions as a platform which might keep them happy. In any case, they would have none of Douglas.

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[10] See John D. Dennison, *Iowa Democracy* (Des Moines, 1939), pp. 115–136.

[11] The optimum number of Douglasites can be established by the 143 votes cast for an immediate vote on the platform on the fifth day, an action which would have split the convention on that day, with favorable results from the Douglasite point of view. With a total of 301 to 303 votes, this was far from the two-thirds necessary to nominate a president. (*Proceedings*, pp. 87, 19)

[12] Dumond, p. 52. Eight of the twelve from Louisiana had incomes in excess of $25,000 per year.

The smallest and toughest faction was not built around regional interests; it centered in Washington, a fusing of iron-jawed politicians from the East and South. This disgruntled remnant of James Buchanan's following was made significant by its delegation, which included four senators, five congressmen, and Caleb Cushing, former United States attorney general and president of this convention. Old Buck's Boys hated Douglas. They had steadily followed the states' rights line, and they blamed their shattered condition on the equally steady opposition of Douglas and his associates. They came with neither platform nor candidate, but they were as elementally tough as a lightwood knot.

Many delegates, from whatever section, were not aligned with any set faction, and one can see little more than a milling uncertainty among them —not an innocuous, questing uncertainty, but that of a hive of wet bees. The Border States furnish one example. Topography gave them their representation: the side-hill farms sent commoners, and the lowland plantations sent aristocrats. Generally characterized as unionists, this mixture bordered on allegiance to North and South. This left them somewhat uneasily in the middle of nowhere.

New York, South Carolina, and nearly half of the Georgia delegation were not much more firmly fixed. True, they were pledged to Douglas; and South Carolina's floor leader, Benjamin F. Perry, was a staunch unionist and Douglas advocate. But South Carolina had gone by default; the powerful Robert B. Rhett and his fellow disunionists had not entered the contest. In Georgia, Douglas owed his strength to the prestige of Alexander H. Stephens, who favored him over the other candidates. These Deep South men were neither Douglasites nor Ultra-Southerners; they were not strongly attracted to either pole. New York was bossed by Tammanycrats, there to play both sides against the middle—when they could find out where the middle was.

There were other Douglas men, anti-Douglasites, Union supporters, and Cincinnati Platform champions from Missouri, Massachusetts, and points between. But there was no settled convention program for this segment. They wanted to preserve the Union, or the party, or the kingship of cotton, and the lucrative trade between East and South. They supposed that Douglas might, or might not, fulfill their desires. This was a balance of power minority; it was upset and buzzing; but it had not settled on the choices it would have to make before this convention was finished.

With woefully few exceptions, the men seated at Charleston were delegates in the weakest sense of the word. Ears to the ground, they had come not to change opinion but to take advantage of it, to crystallize it so that their actions, whatever they might be, would stand justified. And their milling uncertainty or acrimonious certainty mirrored the climate of opinion at home.

In fairness to these timeservers, we will remember that attempting reasonable discussion in 1860 must have been like trying to play cards in a windstorm. This was a distraught nation, chopped into gerrymandered fragments by hatred of slavery or hatred of abolitionists, by fear of southern secession or northern oppression, by the fulminations of Rhett and Edmund Ruffin, by Seward's "irrepressible conflict" and Lincoln's "house divided," and, finally, by the insane raid on Harper's Ferry.

The people of the Border States still maintained a semblance of reasonableness, but they were rather lonely. Elsewhere there was a seething response to propaganda and political action; and added to this turmoil were the cross currents caused by the Panic of 1857. By some quirk of the fortunes of trade, southern agriculture had quickly rebounded, but that of the North and Northwest had not.

Depending upon where your farm was located, conditions in 1860 proved (1) that the slave system formed the soundest and most durable economy, or (2) that hard times were inevitable for the free man when he had to compete with slave labor. And what was going to happen to the already hard-pressed mechanic when the South opened factories with slave labor? North of the Mason-Dixon line, a lot of the ice of logic was thawed by this argument: "What would be the prospects for us and for free labor . . . if civilization of the Southern type prevailed in the Territories? The South may deny . . . the doctrine of irrepressible conflict . . . But they cannot deny that if slavery and free labor were to meet in the Territories, there would be a state of affairs very much resembling a conflict."[13] Not that such theories meant much to eastern industrialists; they were presently engaged in supplying goods to prosperous slave owners, and they hated the idea of losing this commerce. Still, most of the other Easterners were economic brothers to the Westerners.[14]

Socially, too, the masses of the East and West were brothers. They were independent yeomen and mechanics, with a fierce pride in their independence. Not only would Britons never be slaves; they would sneer at those who were supported by slaves. And did it not gall the soul that this (numerically) pitiful slavocracy could rule the nation—that its Lecomptonites had tried to steal Kansas—that its senators were even then pushing through the Davis Resolutions with the open intent of ruining Douglas, their "Little Giant"? And whipping free Northerners into line, decade after decade, with threats of splitting the party or seceding![15]

[13] Providence *Journal*, Jan. 12, 1860.

[14] Northern and southern editors frequently dwelt on economic sectional problems. See Russell, pp. 186, 204–205, and Thomas P. Kettel, *Southern Wealth and Northern Profits* (New York, 1860).

[15] See the *Speech of General J. Watson Webb at Tippecanoe* (New York, 1856),

As to opinion in the Deep South, an editorial spoke not only for the aristocracy but also for most of the nonslaveholders: "Free society! we sicken at the name. When it is but a conglomeration of greasy mechanics, filthy operatives, small farmers, and moon-struck theorists? All the northern, and especially the New England states, are devoid of society fitted for well-bred gentlemen. The prevailing class one meets is that of mechanics struggling to be genteel, and small farmers who do their own drudgery, and yet hardly fit for association with a southern gentleman's body servant."[16]

An unknown quantity, the concern of all southern and many border delegates, was the factor of the Solid South. Somnolent on the first day of the convention, it stood deep and firm in the background.[17] Southern solidarity is a state of mind. It tends toward the quixotic, with "honor" and "loyalty" as catchwords. It can be phrased as an hypothesis: "If a southerner is maltreated or mishandled by an outsider, I must go to his defense, no matter whether I agree with his doctrines or not." Any Southerner might bitterly resent meddling with the South's affairs, or a suggestion that he was not the keeper of his conscience; and he saw that behind Douglas was the New Englander, who regarded himself as the ordained keeper of everybody's conscience, with a bounden duty to exercise the franchise of his ordination.

The calm of the Compromise of 1850 was ended. The breeze freshened, and it had reached gale force by this April of 1860. The salient and terrible fact was the solidity and stolidity with which opinions were held. When a Tennesseean closed his home to his brother's son—when a Virginia lady and a New England gentlewoman publicly consigned each other to "double damnation"—when a North Carolinian of Quaker birth agreed that his first cousin, a minister, should be imprisoned and, but for his extreme age, pilloried and whipped[18]—when the nation had lost all desire to reason, it was time to seek a storm cellar. To Charleston went reeds shaken with this wind.

II

The Democratic Convention of 1860 opened in Charleston on Monday, April 23, and ceased functioning as a unified body on April 30. The first three days were devoted to the seating of the Douglas deputations from the contested state of Illinois, and to a Douglas victory in determining which states were to cast a unit vote. On each of these questions, there was an

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pp. 37–38, 90–91, with the *Speech Delivered in Faneuil Hall* [by Caleb Cushing], (Boston, 1857), p. 5; see also Edgar B. Cale, "Editorial Sentiment in Pennsylvania in the Campaign of 1860," *Pennsylvania History*, IV (1937), 220–229, and Russell, p. 186.

[16] Muscogee (Ga.) *Herald*, in Arthur C. Cole, *The Irrepressible Conflict, 1850–1865* (New York, 1934) [preliminary page].

[17] Phillips, pp. 101–119, 152.

[18] Judge Lindsey Saunders, personal recollections; Boston *Liberator*, Dec. 31, 1859; Johnathan Worth to George McNeill, March 10, and to the Rev. G. W. Bainum, March 31, 1860 (J. G. deR. Hamilton, ed., *The Correspondence of Johnathan Worth* [Raleigh, 1909], I, 110–113).

acrimonious and seemingly senseless battle, even though the weight of legality and precedence lay with the Douglas faction claims. The all-important platform resolutions were read and submitted to the main body on the fourth day. The fifth and sixth days featured the platform proposals, with three noteworthy (and numerous poor) speeches, bitter parliamentary battles, and a violent controversy over an abortive call for the question. Sunday intervened. On Monday the Douglas platform was speedily adopted, with the fire-eaters refusing to vote on the last two-thirds of the resolutions. Promptly thereafter the dissidents and their adherents, nearly one-third of the original assembly, withdrew to the accompaniment of frenzied applause from the galleries. With dramatic and Biblical expedition, the Democrats had taken just seven days to destroy their party.

The seceders established themselves in the Charleston Theatre, waiting for overtures (or the downfall of their opponents), and whiled away the time with repetitious oratory. The regular convention voted to retain the two-thirds rule, counting the missing members as well as those present, whereupon Douglas failed to receive the nomination. The regulars ordered a second convention to meet in Baltimore on June 18 and called on the estranged states to fill their delegations.

The bolters met in Richmond on June 11 and 12 to plan strategy and then moved on to Baltimore, directing their coterie to return to Richmond on June 23. Most of these delegations which walked out at Charleston were simply accredited to the convention at Baltimore; and of those who applied, the greater part were refused admission. They reassembled in Maryland Institute, their numbers augmented by sympathizers who resented the tactics of the majority. The Maryland Institute fragment, just over a third of the original body, nominated Breckinridge immediately after Douglas had been nominated by the remainder of the regular convention.[19]

There was a great deal of speaking in the seven days of the Charleston sessions and some at Baltimore. Rather automatically one may ask: For what purpose? By what rhetorical means? With what results?

All too automatically, it may be assumed that the major issues which undergird a rhetorical clash are prime movers in the clash itself. Certainly there were bedrock issues in this conflict. They revolved around slavery and what to do with it: Protect it? Extend it to the territories? Abolish it? But immediacy of meaning must be denied to these issues in the speaking at Charleston, and may be forgotten in connection with them in Baltimore. By 1860, the arguments pro and con were more than standard; they were embalmed, petrified. Delegate Robert Lowry (Indiana) put the situation neatly: "The principles . . . have been known for months and years. Gentlemen have been engaged [in conventions and legislatures] in the discussion of every issue that will be before us, and the country does not need to be informed upon any of them."[20]

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[19] The Breckinridge-Lane faction report, (*Proceedings*), is the most accurate and complete of three that were published; it was generally used (after comparison with the other reports and the newspapers) for this study.

Through a process of transference indicative of the pervading animosity, issues had become personalities. They emerge, pure white or coal black, in speeches throughout the convention: "The Black Republicans," aiding and abetting the demand that northern Democrats lay down "our honor at the feet of the South" (Benjamin F. Butler, Massachusetts); "Massachusets, the home of fanaticism," as compared to "Virginia, the home of Democracy" (N. Burrow, Arkansas); the South, which had "been the cradle of Democracy" and therefore had the right "to ask for protection" (W. W. Avery, North Carolina); the Northwest, "come into your presence covered with honorable scars" earned while "fighting for Southern Rights" (B. M. Samuels, Iowa).[21] First and foremost, there was the "issue of Douglas." It was worked into the deliberations as early and forcefully as possible by one of Buck's Boys, Josiah Randall of Pennsylvania: "I . . . never will vote for a man who has not the confidence of a majority of the South."[22] The hard feeling engendered by the Douglas question can be gauged by the fight which immediately followed.

There were, of course, platform proposals which outlined a stand on the original issues–in fact, three of them. The first (the majority report, since Douglas's enemies controlled the platform committee) stood forthrightly for the protection and expansion of slavery. It even contained a plank which could be construed as advocating resurrection of the slave trade. Such frankness in taking a stand led Murat Halstead to say: "These Southern men have a great advantage over the Douglas men in the fact that . . . they have principles. [They want] no Douglas dodges–no double constructions–no janus-faced lying resolutions–no double-tongued and double damned trifling with the people."[23]

The "double damned trifling" of the Douglas platform followed the pattern of the Cincinnati platform of 1856, referred to by the Southerners quoted by Halstead. Its major tenets were popular sovereignty and reliance on court decisions to decide all questions about slavery; and it added whatever sops (for instance, support of the Dred Scott decision) the Northerners could safely throw to the South. The third proposal was the Cincinnati platform, "pure and simple," offered by Benjamin F. Butler.[24]

Here an important question arises. Was there ever a possibility of an agreement, a compromise on these conflicting propositions? The differences were not much greater than those met by the Constitutional Convention of 1787. Might these men have faced their disharmonies as thoughtfully as did the Union's founders? Might they, using the suggestion submitted in 1787 by Benjamin Franklin, have sawed off a bit here and a bit there, thus fitting the planks into a solid structure? In fine, could there have been cooperative reasoning or constructive persuasion? There is no doubt about the answer, and the single-minded devotion with which the great majority pursued their predetermined objectives affords a major clue to the over-all nature of this assembly's rhetoric.

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[20] *Proceedings*, pp. 25–26.

[21] *Proceedings*, pp. 98, 103, 48–51, 95.

[22] *Proceedings*, p. 14.

[23] Halstead, pp. 3–4.

[24] *Proceedings*, pp. 45–46.

To begin with, it should be recognized that Douglas' first position at Charleston was a true compromise between the rabid Republicans and the rabid slavocracy. It said, in effect: "We will not destroy slavery overnight, and with it ten billion dollars of investments, nor will we extend slavery against the will of the majority. We will cease disruptive agitation, either for the extension or the abolition of slavery. We will not pervert the Constitution to make it an instrument for the extension of slave power, nor will we ignore it and appeal to a 'higher power.' We will let the people decide what they want and the Constitution decide whether they may have it; and if the people do not like the decision, they have the legal means to change it." The historian applies only the pragmatic test, with excellent hindsight, when he says that Douglas was "forced" into a weak position by Lincoln at Freeport or by his opponents in the Senate during the succeeding two years.

Without necessarily ascribing Pauline motives to them, we may say that the clan Douglas had for years exercised charity, which suffers long and is kind. They had found an intermediate position increasingly less tenable in their states; yet they had kept to a middle course in the hope of drawing to them moderate men in the North and in the South. The crux, counseling moderation and cooperation, was this: Southerners held the balance of power; without their acquiescence, Douglas could expect neither nomination nor election, and he dearly wanted both.

The Illinoisan understood the disruption threat and sought to guard against it. A resolution binding the Illinois delegation stated that no honorable man would accept a seat at Charleston, or was a true party member, if he was not willing to abide by that body's decision. And Douglas himself was ready to go as far as he dared, for on the fourth day of the convention he telegraphed friends to accept the Cincinnati platform with approval of the Dred Scott decision added.[25]

Other parties submitted nominal compromises. John Cochrane, Tammany congressman, offered a resolution which said, in part, that "any attempt by Congress or a Territorial Legislature" to interfere with property would be "unwise in policy and repugnant to the Constitution." The Tennessee proposal, put forth after the southern withdrawal, was much the same, adding approval of "the decisions of the Supreme Court." Neither of these resolutions was considered or supported in speechmaking. Ben Butler's minority report, an acceptable compromise in 1856, was defeated this time by a heavy majority.[26] In honest truth, the three remedies represented not a compromise, but a series of ambiguities which each faction might interpret any of several ways for home consumption.

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[25] Cincinnati *Daily Gazette*, Jan. 9; New Orleans *Daily Picayune*, Apr. 27, 1860. The Dred Scott decision gave the South just about what it wanted.

The platform committee was given a chance to effect compromise when, as dissolution threatened on the sixth day, the assembly voted by 152 to 151 to recommit the platform. Three platforms were returned again, Butler's being the same (but supported this time by four other states), and the other two being so little changed that the alterations would have been laughable if the matter had not been so serious.[27]

All along, trying to assign full credit to compromise efforts, one is confronted with questions. There are Butler's two speeches on his proposal. His first makes interesting reading; it was the work of a competent artist; it had, in composition and delivery, "an incisive ferocity that was refreshing to behold."[28] But was it an impartial mid-course, offered in good faith? Hardly, with the topics and phraseology chosen for the speeches.

Butler's opening was a sarcastic swipe at Avery and Henry B. Payne, who had begun the defense of the majority and minority reports, respectively. He continued:

> If the platform adopted at Cincinnati was wrong, where was the chairman of our committee? . . . Mr. Avery . . . said: "North Carolina casts ten votes for the resolutions, and will give ten thousand in November." [Laughter and applause.] Where were the eloquent gentlemen from Mississippi? Where were the keen-eyed politicians from Alabama? Where were those somewhat uneasy friends of ours from South Carolina? Where was gallant Kentucky then? Where was Georgia then, that no man rose to object to the resolutions? Where then, I say, was our eloquent chairman?
>
> "Oh, where was Roderick then?
> One blast upon his bugle horn
> Was worth a thousand men." [Great laughter.]

Answering the charge of double interpretation of his platform, Butler repeated this substitution of irony for refutation: "When Omniscience sends us the divine law . . . for two thousand years, almost, bands of men have been engaged in different interpretations . . . [and] have burned their fellow creatures at the stake as an evidence of the sincerity of their faith. [Laughter.]"

Note the quality of this composition, especially in the use of repetition, apt quotation, and allusion. And what end did he seek? On the sixth day, when he presented the Cincinnati platform again, Butler exposed both his purpose and his opinion of the convention: "If this country must suffer; if the Democratic party must suffer; if the Union must be endangered . . . she shall not be able to turn to me and say: 'You did it.' I will clear my skirts." Hand-washing, shifting onus to the opposition, is evident. And every topic and subtopic indicated Butler's implicit faith in the sure failure of any attempt at agreement.

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[26] *Proceedings*, pp. 46, 141.
[27] *Proceedings*, pp. 87–94, 112.
[28] Halstead, p. 46; *Proceedings*, pp. 56–59, 98.

On the seventh day, after disruption was assured, there issued from the uproar an announcement that W. A. Richardson wanted the floor to bring peace offerings. Why were they not brought on the fifth day, after Douglas' telegram arrived? At least, why not on the sixth day, when an announcement of modified platform demands might have held all but a few determined bolters in the convention? Richardson was howled down, and Charles E. Stuart rose on a parliamentary point with a bitter tirade which helped the secession along. Why did Richardson delay, and why did Stuart attack?[29]

The simplest answer is the soundest one. Payne, Richardson, and the rest of the Douglasites were not ready to give an inch. The matter had gone beyond the issue of Douglas. The Davis Resolutions were designed for crippling Douglas *and* his friends or driving them out of the party. When things got hot in Charleston, down came Senator John Slidell, Buchanan man and archenemy of the Douglasites, bringing "war to the knife," and the northern Democrats were asked to "submit themselves to assassination or commit suicide." The clan Douglas had a plan; and conciliation was so far from their minds that, a month earlier, *they* had determined to secede if the Alabama platform were adopted.[30]

No compromise was possible under the True Southron's plan, either. He did not even mean to cooperate. He showed this by his vote in the seating contest, for there the Ultras stood alone in demanding admission for the anti-Douglas forces of New York and the patently illegal Ike Cook group from Illinois. He showed this spirit in actions like those of Effingham Lawrence of Louisiana, who contemptuously moved, in the midst of the platform contest, that the convention adjourn *sine die*.[31] Lawrence's fellow, Alexander Mouton, spoke the mind of the True Southron on the day of disruption: "Are we not divided . . . in such a manner that we can never be again united and reconciliated? . . . And . . . I should have suggested the propriety of dispensing with all these votes, and have come at once to the conclusion we have now reached."[32] The True Southron was there to rule or ruin: "The Mississippians understood themselves to be of the class that dictates doctrine to the Democratic party, and talked as if the party was their property, 'peculiar' and that, and rather a worn-out old nigger, welcome to die. . . . Mississippi talked of principle, and 'damn the party,' if it was not squarely upon principle. In other words, if the party was not to serve the South, its mission was accomplished."[33]

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[29] *Proceedings*, pp. 115–118.

[30] Toombs to A. H. Stephens, Feb. 10, 1860 (*Correspondence of Toombs et al.*, p. 461); Horace Greeley, *The American Conflict* (Hartford, 1864–1866), I, 306–309; Halstead, pp. 7, 42; R. P. Letcher to John J. Crittenden, Mar. 1, 1860 (Mrs. Chapman Coleman, *The Life of John J. Crittenden* [Philadelphia, 1871], p. 187).

[31] *Proceedings*, pp. 2–3, 105.

[32] *Proceedings of the National Democratic Convention Convened at Charleston, S.C., April 23, 1860* (Washington, 1860), p. 36.

Old Buck's Boys were about as far as any cabal could get from compromise. Their goal was simple and direct. They were there to ruin Douglas and the Douglasites. Linton Stephens' analysis characterized them as follows: "I begin to believe that the Charleston Convention will end in a row and that Black Republicanism will be triumphant.—The Democratic Party . . . represents the spectacle of grumbling about the ownership of the house while the burglars are rifling it.[34]

There were occasional rumors of attempted conciliation in the caucuses. Might there not have been men who counseled moderation in closed meetings? Unfortunately, the caucuses cannot be fully reconstructed; yet glimpses reveal much of their general tone. Pennsylvanian shouts of "coward" and "liar" were loud enough to be heard beyond the doors; pairs of southern discussants wound up, on several occasions, by proposing duels; and a couple of Indianians hurled all the handy cutlery and china. In the first Pennsylvania caucus the Douglas delegates decided to walk out if the unit voting rule were passed; in the first southern caucus, Bedford Brown of North Carolina indicated his disharmony in a brisk speech and did walk out.[35]

One cannot say whether the spirit of the convention pervaded the caucuses, or that of the caucuses was carried to the convention floor. Nor does it matter. In public speaking and private discussion this was wrangling rhetoric, a tug of war for the pieces. The rhetoric of wrangle seems to produce a progressively violent chain reaction. If this process is stopped, as it was in 1787, a workable state of balance may be reached; in 1860 it was not and an explosion resulted. The mode was established early and earnestly adhered to.

Assuredly, the split was no news. Republican papers had gleefully predicted it. By December 4, 1859, Bob Toombs saw that the South could not agree on a candidate, and that though Douglas was through, he could prevent the nomination of anyone else. That sturdy unionist and anachronistic statesman, John J. Crittenden, reported on April 15, 1860, that "whatever may be the decision of the convention, a great schism, it is thought, must follow." Just before the official body convened, the six states which were going to head the walkout (the Gulf states and Arkansas) caucused and announced this intention through "confidential sources" to the newspapers.[36]

Could these men have agreed? Long before the platform committee had reported, Halstead observed: "It is indeed ridiculous and absurd for this body of delegates to be pretending to try to agree on a platform, when the whole country, themselves included, know well that their disagreements are radical and absolute."[37] In a final summation, based on foresight as well as hindsight, Toombs commented: "The real difficulty . . . was that a large number of Democrats North and South had committed themselves so far against Douglas that they were lost if he was nominated, and they therefore preferred ruining the party with themselves than ruining themselves without the party."[38]

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[33] Halstead, pp. 2–3.

[34] Linton Stephens to Alexander H. Stephens, May 1, 1860 (Linton Stephens MSS, Manhattanville College of the Sacred Heart, New York).

[35] Providence *Journal*, and *The New York Times*, Apr. 24; New Orleans *Daily Picayune*, Apr. 28, 1860; Halstead, p. 8.

[36] Toombs to T. W. Thomas, Dec. 4, 1859 (*Correspondence of Robert Toombs, et al.*, II, 450); Crittenden to Hunton, Apr. 15, 1860 (Coleman, II, 193); New Orleans *Daily Picayune*, Apr. 28; New York *Tribune*, Apr. 23–25; Charleston *Courier*, Apr. 23, 1860.

III

If there was no intent toward constructive persuasion or discussion, what were the purposes of the factional spokesmen? We cannot know precisely what was in the minds of these men, any more than we can know everything that went on in the smoke-filled rooms. But we can call logic to our aid, describe what they were up against, and thereby determine what they had to do.

Nose-counting tells us as much as it told the leaders, even before the first session was called to order. The fire-eaters, there to withdraw if any but their platform were adopted, came without even a respectable minority. They needed to add to their numbers, to win over a reasonable facsimile of the Solid South. With this, they might form a third party strong enough to throw the election into the friendly Senate, and they surely would have a strong nucleus for secession from the Union. Without it, their withdrawal would be the meaningless defection of a few hotheads.[39]

The Douglasites could push through their platform, but by not much more than a bare majority. With a full convention and the usual two-thirds rule invoked Douglas could not be nominated. However, if the irreconcilables departed, three-fourths of the body—the bulk of the Democracy—would remain, and Douglas might be nominated. The Douglasites welcomed the planned withdrawal; indeed, if their foes decided to stay put and block a nomination (and there were rumors of this), they had to be driven out.[40]

Old Buck's Boys had an ingenious plan. If there was a split there might be a stalemate in the next election, with the election thrown into the House. Then their friend, Joe Lane, as president *pro tem* of the Senate, would become the practical president while the House divided on the presidency. At least, Douglas would be destroyed;[41] and to accomplish this, the dying snake would strike at its own body. Without intending to do so, a reporter complimented the ability of the leaders when he said, "Every speech widens the breach."[42]

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[37] Halstead, p. 47.

[38] Toombs to A. H. Stephens, May 5, 1860 (*Correspondence of Toombs, et al.*, II, 468–469).

[39] Venable, pp. 235–241.

[40] Toombs to A. H. Stephens, May 5, 1860 (*Correspondence of Toombs, et al.*, II, 468–469); Venable, pp. 237–240; Halstead, p. 9.

[41] Cale, p. 221.

It had to be done carefully. The administration men were set, but the other cliques had either to stiffen the backbones of adherents or gain converts. Dissolution of the Union was the probable consequence of dissolution at Charleston, and a substantial minority was not ready to face such an outcome. Douglasite speakers aimed at holding their majority to the task, no matter what happened. The business of the fire-eaters was to win over waverers and conservatives to secession.

The Ultra-South was early at its task. Shortly after the members had settled in their places, Ethelbert Barksdale opened a fierce battle for the contested seats. The New York delegation was a key one, of course. Foolish as this fight may have seemed (for there was no doubt as to the outcome), an issue made at this point would give the Southrons a chance to say, here and afterward, "They even denied representation to our friends from the North." But this was not the main objective. Barksdale's tactics in running debate point to other motives. He threw out clear logic, spurned moderation, and turned to sardonic, offensive bitterness—with good, foreseeable results. If this engendered a responsive bitterness, here was an added excuse for withdrawing. Sweet reason would not lend itself to justification of drastic action, nor would it stir the Charleston audience to rabid partisanship.[43]

The administration clique advanced to the attack on the second day. This clash was on the unit rule, the application of which was to give Douglas his majority. Speaking ostensibly on this point, Josiah Randall gave the Southerners northern support, and then pounced on the "national man" thesis of the Douglasites and the rectitude of their actions: "I come here as a Pennsylvanian to defend the rights of the South. . . . [This] candidate (Douglas) . . . would be found to be the weakest candidate before the public. . . . And gentlemen tell us that this is Democracy."[44]

It was now the business of the Douglas faction to establish the mood and mode of their rhetoric. W. A. Richardson, one of their floor leaders, replied: "The gentleman from Pennsylvania has instructed us in the usages and doctrines of the Democratic party. It may be very interesting to know how long the gentleman has been a member of that party. I understand that he has been a member of it for three years and four months. . . . From my early boyhood up to this hour, all my manhood . . . has been devoted to the cause of the Democratic party. . . . I do not wish to be dictated to by a Democrat of yesterday."[45]

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[42] *The New York Times*, Apr. 28, 1860.

[43] *Proceedings*, pp. 3–9; Halstead, pp. 19–22.

[44] *Proceedings*, p. 14.

[45] *Proceedings*, pp. 14, 16.

Halstead was as wrong in saying that Richardson's speech "was not called for" as he was in calling the fire-eaters' first battle a "very foolish thing."[46] Richardson knew what he was about. Randall could go, and good riddance; and here was a vindication which could be used by any Northwesterner: "*We* are the old stalwarts, fighting for the good of the party." More important, he sought to arouse the combative instincts of waverers by showing, in this bold speech, that there would be no backing down as there was at Cincinnati. The effect upon the southern aristocracy of boldness in a backwoods upstart can easily be imagined; and this, too, was a by-product coveted by the Illinoisan.

A lull followed while the platform committee was drawing up its reports. Then all hands set to in a masterly example of contentious debate. Excepting one off-key effort by John Cochrane to inject a note of good-natured humor, the whole was an inharmonious medley of juggled words, shifty parliamentary moves, posturing speeches, all designed to oppose force with equal force—up to, and including, fission.

Proof of this obdurate intent glimmers through the concerted use of appeals to the "baser" motives of hate, fear, anger, and self-interest. This concert was curiously repeated in the nominal appeals to "higher" motives, as Douglasites and fire-eaters strove to show their nobility, fairness, loyalty, and righteousness. The True Southrons kept a rhetorical eye on the well-publicized chivalric ideal—the Chevalier Bayard (not to be confused with his descendant, the senator from Delaware) personified: "Our word is our bond; our manhood is not to be questioned; we enter the lists for our just due, and our honor's sake." The Douglasite appeals sound the same: "We surrendered in 1856, but only out of party loyalty and love of the union; honor and manhood will not permit us to bend before the lash of the slave-owners now."[47]

Curiously concerted, these appeals; and they show speakers looking in the direction of a wider audience to whom they were about to present a *fait accompli*. But the difference between sectional concepts of these virtues underlines the strength of the divisive forces to which the appeals were made. The South was hearing about an aristocratic manhood which would term niggling compromise with commoners contemptible, and a chivalric honor which could dictate any sort of foolishly gallant charge. Northerners (and many men of the Border States) heard the Douglasites talking about the honor of freemen, and of a yeoman manhood which would not again jump to the side of the road and pull its forelock when a slave aristocracy threatened to ride it down.

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[46] Halstead, pp. 19, 25.

[47] Political honor stood under the cloud of the Covode Investigation, and dishonesty was assailed under the revivalism of the 1850s; see Nichols, pp. 21–40, and Fite, pp. 85–89. And did these men sense a need to seem righteous as well as noble? Delegate M. C. Claiborne (Missouri) complained of having to listen to "Methodist sermons" (*Proceedings*, p. 104).

Most of the duelists were rather gauche performers, awkward handlers of the rapier or crude hackers with the broadsword. Two of them showed considerable virtuosity: William L. Yancey and George E. Pugh, the Southron and the Douglasite, whose speeches on the platform were given top billing on the fifth night.[48]

Looked at from one angle, these two speeches present a paradox, for the Southerner ate no fire this night, and the spokesman for the perennially mild Douglas clan ripped and snorted. For an explanation, it is necessary to go back to the larger audience and the purposes of the factions, and touch upon the ethos of the speakers.[49]

Yancey's adaptation to the demands of ethical persuasion (the persuasion of the man himself, as he stood before the immediate audience) was uniquely competent. The Alabama leader came with the reputation of fire-eater and, for various reasons, the great majority wanted no part of fire-eating. Yancey was as mild as a May morning. From first to last, he went about Charleston in smiling friendliness, listening intently and with the utmost courtesy to every man, no matter what his faction. It was not provable then by his words and actions, nor is it provable now, that he was there as a confirmed disruptionist. Men could say that he was the father of the Alabama Resolutions, and that this document guaranteed the dissolution of the convention. To this Yancey replied, by his manner, that he had done no more than an honorable, sapient man had to do, and that he would go, in all good will, only where honor and duty led him.

Pugh rose to speak as leader of the Ohio delegation and Douglas's chief supporter. A United States senator, he was fellow to beaten men from his section and was himself on the way to defeat one year later—the probability of which was pretty well known to the audience. By comparison with the polished Southerner, he was a rough stalwart, with an uncourtly rasp in his voice. Pugh was a strong man, and on this night his deadly earnestness was such as to hush the crowd to unaccustomed stillness.

Sharply contrasted in style and delivery, Yancey and Pugh exemplified the usual differences between southern and western orators of this period. Southerners tended toward the grand style, Westerners toward the plain style. Yancey's periods were elegant, majestic, rivers winding over their flood plains; Pugh's were angular, broken, brawling, and tumbling out of the hills. Yancey was graceful, debonair, sure in movement; Pugh stumped on the platform, a chunk of granite in motion. Both called the rest of the pack to attack; but Yancey challenged with the melodious call of the gamecock, while Pugh answered with the short bark, the growling roar. Each stood thus before his followers as champion: the champion of gentlemen; the champion of commoners.

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[48] *Proceedings*, pp. 66–79 (Yancey); pp. 79–86 (Pugh).

[49] See Austin L. Venable, "William L. Yancey and the League of United Southerners," *Proceedings of the South Carolina Historical Association, 1946*, pp. 8–9; James I. Murphy, "Alabama and the Charleston Convention of 1860," *Transactions of the Alabama Historical Society*, V (1904), 240–246; Halstead, pp. 5–6, 48–50; Charleston *Mercury*, July 14, 1859, Apr. 22–30, 1860; New York *Tribune*, New York *World*, *The New York Times*, Apr. 23–30, 1860.

Both orations were marked by clarity, impeccable grammar, and straight-line organization. The prevalence of enthymematic structure, of tremendous inductive leaps, is a good study in how much one can omit when the listeners are acquainted with the point and are emotionally ready to accept a conclusion. Pugh's speech contains passages of cragged power joined with extremely unsound logic. After a bit of counterargument in which he bragged that the northern Democracy had fought the battles—had been more consistently Democratic than the South—he hurled his defiance: "Now when we come here to debate with you, you commence by telling us that we are an inferior class of beings; that we shall not presume to have or express any opinion . . . that we shall put our hands on our mouths and our mouths in the dust. Gentlemen, you mistake us! We will not do it!"

On and on, Pugh continued to hammer at fear, wounded pride, and self-preservation. In his rasping assault against the Ultra-South, he made one point abundantly clear to all in the Douglas camp: They would have to fight then and there, or not live to fight again. Pugh laid it on the line in his abrupt conclusion, with little softness: "If part from you we must, [we will do so] without anger, but in sorrow."

Aware of his handicaps, Yancey slipped in sentences designed to strengthen his ethical persuasion (and weaken that of the Douglasites): "There is no disunionist that I know of in the delegation from the state of Alabama. There is no disruptionist that I know of. . . . I am no seeker for office. . . . I can ask to be heard as *amicus curiae*." Further to reinforce the impression of clearheaded reasonableness, Yancey soft-pedaled emotionalism and presented much the more logical speech of the two. Turning the tables, he stated that he had come "to save the constitutional rights of the South" and "to save the union." He then proceeded to list, in series, the points at which the North, with the assistance of Douglas, had encroached upon the rights of slaveholders. This argument, supported by example, seems quite sound even when tested by the rules of formal logic.

But Yancey's was no dull, journeyman logic. He used all the devices of accurate, forceful words, figures of speech, and sentence structure. With keen suggestiveness, he slipped in attacks as savage as those of Pugh, but infinitely more subtle. The band opposed to southern rights had grown, he said, "under different names—such as Abolitionists, Free-Soilers, and squatter-sovereignty men." Such a band could be followed only so far: "Yield nothing of principle for mere party success . . . for . . . the leaders of the masses who ignore principle and care only for votes." Yancey's final example in the list of southern wrongs was: "Now a Southern man of God" will not often be admitted "into the northern pulpit to pray."

Pugh's audience gave him a roaring vote of confidence, time and again.

The growing stiffness among Douglas men must be attributed in part to this speech. Likewise, the fifteen-minute ovation given Yancey shows the frenzy of sustained enthusiasm poured into the delegates and galleries by his speech. Both men hit their mark; and if Yancey did the better job, it took one of his strongest efforts, urged on by the spur of greater odds and the response of more sympathetic auditors.

Yancey's moderate and subtly immoderate speech was published in pamphlet form and reached a wide audience. It was "brought to bear on the election of delegates" to the Alabama state convention. Alexander H. Stephens and Jefferson Davis used quotations to prove that the South was not disunionist, and opposition newspapers applauded its moderation. At the same time, Yancey took his place among the Republicans as an extremist: " 'To precipitate the Cotton States into revolution' . . . traces its paternity to Mr. Yancey, the great leader of the disunionist movement. You see it in relief on every newspaper, side by side with 'irrepressible conflict,' and you hear it . . . on the stump or in the grog-shop."[50]

On the seventh day, D. C. Glenn and Charles E. Stuart elected themselves to cap the structure whose foundations had been laid by Richardson, Barksdale, and Randall. The choice was good. Glenn was a Mississippi planter, nonoffice holder, aristocrat, and fervid fire-eater. Stuart, one of the leading Northwesterners, was a deposed politician, commoner, and hard-bitten Douglasite.[51]

Throughout the convention, the Southrons had been at some pains to keep the Middle Border persons appropriately subservient. None except Yancey had been notably subtle in tactics or manner. Nor had they been successful, for the Douglas men had arched their backs. On this morning, as the northwestern platform was being adopted, point by point, Richardson rose to offer a compromise. Despite assurance that peace offerings were being tendered, the Ultras howled the Douglasite down.

On a parliamentary point, Stuart got up and closed with his and Richardson's enemies. Dipping into the dish served by Yancey, he flung a bit of it back into the faces of the Southerners: "He asks us, have we anything to lose. . . . In property . . . nothing. . . . But, sir, when asked to yield up a principle of honor, then never, never. . . . When, therefore, we are asked to go home and tell the people that we deny the principle of non-intervention by Congress with the subject of slavery in any phase, except to return fugitives from justice—" A sharp interruption followed, for this was a shrewd pathetic shot. It compressed into a neat package the sum of the insoluble differences. The North maintained that the South wanted intervention, but only when the Fugitive Slave Law protected its property; Southerners held that Douglas' nonintervention plan was designed to drive slaveholders out of the territories. Both were right. But Stuart's logic did not cause all of the hullabaloo. Yancey's had been an appeal to honesty for the sake of honor; here was an accusation of southern dishonesty compounded by Southrons seeking to force dishonor upon the Douglasites. Stuart pinned a knife to the wall of Institute Hall.

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[50] *Letter from William M. Peyton to The Hon. Wm. C. Rives on the Present Crisis* (New York [Jan. 8, 1861]). See also Yancey to Clement C. Clay, May 4, 1860 (Clay Papers, Duke Univ.); Toombs to A. H. Stephens, May 12 and 16, 1860 (*Correspondence of Toombs, et al.*, II, 479); Dunbar Rowland, ed., *Jefferson Davis, Constitutionalist: His Letters, Papers, and Speeches* (Jackson, Miss., 1923), IV, 297–298; Savannah *Republican*, Apr. 28; Cincinnati *Daily Gazette*, Apr. 30, 1860.

[51] *Proceedings*, pp. 116–118 (Stuart); pp. 121–122 (Glenn).

Nor had the ex-senator done anything he had not wanted to do. Avenging the insult to Richardson, justifying the Douglasites, and promoting a small secession were all consummations devoutly desired. Only when he observed that he had done too thorough a job did Stuart become somewhat conciliatory. One cannot doubt that, at this point and later on, he and his friends were satisfied with their efforts. For the Douglasites, teamed with the fire-eaters and Buck's Boys, had succeeded. Where weaker spirits might have faltered, all of them had plowed on to the end of the row.

Stuart's speech furnished a splendid cue for the dramatic withdrawal of the wounded minority. Promptly, as at a given signal, Leroy Pope Walker rose to deliver the florid soliloquy which might be entitled "Alabama's Withdrawal." Walker was followed shortly by Glenn, easily the most gifted of the last act's performers.

Glenn's speech should be seen as a delayed peroration to Yancey's. Indeed, it was a fitting climax to a play whose plot had been roughly sketched before the curtain rose. The principal actors had really nothing much more to do than improvise their lines; the audience (the wavering delegates, the Charlestonians, and the nation) was asked only to choose the villain and the hero.

Glenn was equal to the drama's demands. White-faced, jaw muscles working, eyes rolling and glaring, he "mounted a chair, and facing the Ohio delegation, made one of the most impassioned and thrilling twenty-minute speeches to which I have ever listened."[52] This was the strongest kind of emotional oratory. Glenn relied solely, for his effect, upon bare assertion, fighting words, and psychological, powerfully climactic organization. He closed: "Go your way, and we will go ours. . . . Hot like Hagar, friendless and alone . . . but I tell Southern men here, and for them I tell the North, that, in sixty days, you will find a united South [deafening applause, in which the galleries participated]." Thus were the Ultras justified, and the immediate audience was heated to such a pitch that it took such strength as that possessed by Benjamin F. Perry to hold a South Carolinian in the convention.[53]

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[52] Halstead, p. 73; Providence *Journal*, May 1, 1860.

[53] New Orleans *Daily Picayune*, May 2, 1860; B. F. Perry Papers, Univ. of North Carolina Archives. Perry remained with two others, but his profound depression is indicated by the fact that not an entry appears in his diary from this time onward for some four years.

The denouement followed at Baltimore, and what happened was a foregone conclusion. The speaking there was a confirmation of the most destructive aspects of the Charleston sessions. Nothing was added, nothing subtracted. Both sides seemed to aim at twisting knives in the wound.

The Douglasites now knew that they could not rule, and they went cheerily on with the business of ruining. Recklessly they piled on steam-roller parliamentary tactics, with insultingly short shrift for those they called revolters. Responding in kind, the dissidents announced that they were leaving a "democratic party, stabbed by assassins, now grinning upon this floor [Applause, hisses and ironical laughter]." The assassin speaking was a Lecomptonite, withdrawing for California.[54]

This second disruption did not greatly concern the fire-eaters. Florida had stated, on the day before the credentials committee was to report, that she wished to be omitted from those states admitted or seeking admission.[55] Most of the rest were "perfectly indifferent in regard to the action of the convention" and were "anxious to return to Richmond."[56]

Cheerfully accepting their dismissal, the bolters reassembled at Maryland Institute in Baltimore, where they were joined by sympathizers who were alienated by Douglasite tactics and attitudes. Yancey's speech there is noteworthy for its playful, frolicsome phraseology, and for the high good humor with which it was delivered and received.

The Democracy was finished; the Union was finished. And back they all went, these dedicated men, fully meriting the epitaph written for them by the North Carolinian, Weldon N. Edwards:

> I expected nothing from the National Convention—all its results have verified my predictions to many friends. . . . Everything now lies upon the surface, and the managers are mere *surface-men*. I know the character of the times, and the dirty influences which in this day prompt to action. The democratic proclivities of the age pervade our whole country—nothing can arrest our downward tendency to absolute government—the idea of a Republic is cherished by but few. What a season for Demagogues and Charlatans![57]

IV

In sober truth, this was speechmaking at its worst, with scarcely one redeeming example. The majority was in Charleston to prove a negative—that negative so beloved of the Greek sophists: To establish our side as the better by proving the other side the worse. In a manner satisfactory to themselves, they did it. They were there to have their own way or else. They succeeded. In so doing, they adopted (and promoted) the national pattern of rhetorical wrangling. And the followers of Yancey and Rhett, Pugh and Douglas, Seward and Lincoln, went down the broad path to sleep as peacefully as a man may on all the battlefields from Manassas to Appomattox.

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[54] Delegate Austin E. Smith (*Proceedings*, p. 215).

[55] *Official Proceedings of the Democratic National Convention in 1860* (Cleveland, Ohio), p. 110.

[56] John A. Cobb to John B. Lamar, June 20, 1860 (Correspondence of Toombs, *et al.*, II, 483).

[57] Letter to Thomas Ruffin, June 28, 1860 (J. G. deR. Hamilton, ed., *The Papers of Thomas Ruffin* [Raleigh, 1918], III, 85).

The Republican National Convention of 1860

KENNETH M. STAMPP

12

The secretary's official report opens tersely: "At 12:10 p.m., Wednesday, May 16, 1860, the Delegates having assembled, the Convention was called to order by Hon. Edwin D. Morgan, of New York."[1] Thus the Republican party, then only six years old, began the task of selecting a candidate and writing a platform for its second presidential campaign.

This youthful political organization bore the name, and professed its faith in the principles, of the party which had elevated Thomas Jefferson to the presidency sixty years before. But Jefferson would not have felt at home in this gathering of latter-day Republicans. He would have been uncomfortable in Chicago, where the convention met, a rough, pushing, booming city of one hundred thousand people—already in 1860 the railroad hub, shipping center, and industrial metropolis of the Great Lakes region. He would have been uneasy in the company of these politicians who came from the farms and cities of the North, and he would have wondered at the singular absence of members of the southern landed gentry. In fact, Jefferson even would have doubted the wisdom and propriety of such a political phenomenon as a national nominating convention.

American political practices had undergone some basic changes since 1800, when the Jeffersonians named their presidential candidate in a private congressional caucus and appealed to a restricted electorate. In the following years western farmers, eastern workingmen, and middle-class reformers had struggled successfully to broaden the base of American democracy. In political terms this "rise of the common man" had involved such reforms as the direct election of presidential electors, the abolition of property qualifications for voting and officeholding, and the substitution of the national nominating convention for the congressional caucus. The nominating convention was supposed to give rank-and-file party members a greater voice in choosing candidates and writing platforms. Thus, by 1860, the "common man" had gained increased opportunities to make his influence felt in government.

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[1] Charles W. Johnson, ed., *Proceedings of the First Three Republican National Conventions of 1856, 1860 and 1864* (Minneapolis, 1893), p. 83 (hereafter cited as *Proceedings*). For general accounts of the Republican National Convention of 1860 see Murat Halstead, *Caucuses of 1860: A History of the National Conventions of the Current Presidential Campaign* (Columbus, Ohio, 1860), pp. 120–154; Reinhard H. Luthin, *The First Lincoln Campaign* (Cambridge, Mass., 1944), pp. 136–167; William E. Baringer, *Lincoln's Rise to Power* (Boston, 1937), pp. 188–300; P. Orman Ray, *The Convention that Nominated Lincoln* (Chicago, 1916); Emerson D. Fite, *The Presidential Campaign of 1860* (New York, 1911), pp. 117–131.

How wisely, how effectively, the "common man" used his political power would depend upon his level of literacy, upon his comprehension of the problems of his society, and upon his willingness to defend such essentials of democracy as freedom of speech and assembly. To the extent that voters were deficient in these matters, they were likely to become the victims and not the masters of political machines. Then the delegates to national conventions would be controlled by powerful party leaders; candidates and platforms would be the products of secret bargains dictated by special interests; politicians would appeal to the emotions and not the intellects of men; and campaigns would become circuses, with parades, barbecues, and extravagant stump oratory. And the use of such political devices would make a travesty of the "rise of the common man."

Just how vulnerable to such tactics much of the American electorate actually was had been amply demonstrated in the fabulous "log-cabin, hard-cider" campaign of 1840. Whig and Democratic leaders, whose followers included men of all classes, regions, and sections, had repeatedly found it necessary not only to compromise internal differences but also to conceal issues and confuse voters in order to hold their heterogeneous organizations together. It had almost become an American tradition for presidential candidates to be noncontroversial mediocrities. In a very real sense, the similarities in the ideologies of the two major parties were more significant than their differences. If this was the "price of Union," then the burlesquing of political democracy was a major part of the cost.[2]

But in the middle of the nineteenth century the course of American politics threatened to take a different turn. The problem of Negro slavery and the whole complex of social and economic issues dividing North and South gradually caused the two old national parties to disintegrate. In 1848 the Democrats lost some of their northern followers to the Free-Soilers; more broke away in 1854 in protest against Stephen A. Douglas' Kansas-Nebraska bill. By 1860 the two wings of the party were no longer able to unite behind a single presidential candidate. And by then only a fragment of the Whig party survived to support the candidacy of John Bell of Tennessee.

The new Republican party, formed in 1854, was the most significant political product of sectionalism. At the time of its inception it was, in part, a popular mass movement relatively free from the control of political machines. Drawing its support from free-state Whigs, political abolitionists, Free-Soilers, "Anti-Nebraska" Democrats, temperance reformers, and antiforeign "Know-Nothings," it appealed to the middle-class interests and antislavery sentiments of the North. It made an impressive showing in the election of 1856, when it carried all but four of the northern states for its first presidential candidate, John C. Frémont.

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[2] For an essay on this point see the introduction to Richard Hofstadter, *The American Political Tradition* (New York, 1948). For insights into American political practices in the 1840s see Robert Gray Gunderson, *The Log-Cabin Campaign* (Lexington, Ky., 1957); for the 1850s see Roy F. Nichols, *The Disruption of American Democracy* (New York, 1948).

The next four years had given Republicans ample time to perfect their organization, to broaden their appeal, and to become increasingly realistic in their electioneering techniques. And now, on May 16, 1860, party delegates were again gathering in convention to prepare for another struggle for national political supremacy. This time the Republican campaign was going to end in victory—a victory that would lead to disunion, to four years of civil war, and to many years of Republican rule, during which American institutions and public policy would undergo profound changes.

Since this first Republican victory produced such momentous results, the nature and proceedings of the convention that planned it have considerable historical significance. It is important to know whether the delegates performed their duties in a manner which conformed with the seriousness of their task, whether they expressed the views of average Republicans. In short, did this party convention prove to be an effective agency of political democracy? It is equally important to investigate the problem of communication. How decisive was open discussion on the convention floor in determining the action of this body? How decisive were the private conferences, the secret bargains, and the outside pressures? To what extent did the delegates honestly try to explain, through their formal speeches, their party's position on various public questions? To what extent did they deliberately make their appeal vague or deceptive? These are not matters of little consequence, for the speakers were heard not only by potential supporters in the North but also by angry critics in the South. This convention provided one of the last great public airings of national issues before peaceful discussion gave way to violence.

Chicago Republicans furnished adequate accommodations for this gathering of their political friends. They had just finished constructing a huge wooden "Wigwam" for the convention's special use. It was a two-story structure, 100 feet wide and 180 feet long, capable of holding more people than any other building in the country. In addition to the 466 delegates and numerous newspaper reporters, there was room for possibly as many as 10,000 spectators. The various state delegations sat together on a stage which ran the width of the building. About 1200 ladies and their escorts were seated in a gallery. The rest of the audience stood on a series of platforms which descended to the stage. These platforms were always filled to capacity, and usually a huge crowd milled about in the streets outside.

The interior of the Wigwam was crude and unfinished, but the ladies of Chicago had decorated it gaudily with wreaths, festoons, coats of arms of the several states, multicolored streamers, flags, and artificial flowers. However aesthetically offensive this may have been, the building served its basic purpose well. It must have been a painful ordeal to stand long hours on the densely packed platforms, but all were able to see and hear the proceedings on the stage. The acoustics were excellent; many witnesses testified that an ordinary voice could be heard in all parts of the hall.[3]

The delegates who assembled in this spacious Wigwam were a heterogeneous lot. Most of them were obscure local politicians who played passive roles and cast their votes in conformance with instructions from state conventions or from party leaders to whom they were attached. Rarely was their action the product of a spontaneous impulse or a reasoned decision arrived at in the course of free debates on the convention floor. The proceedings of this body indicated that the Republican party was already losing the attributes of a mass movement, that it was more inclined to follow a course of expediency than it had been in 1856. With success so likely, the practical politicians were taking control and forcing the party to behave in traditional ways.[4] Those who would compromise principles for the sake of success, whose eyes were focused upon the political rewards of victory, were in the majority.

To these political realists the open discussions in the Wigwam were primarily for public consumption and rarely relevant to the business they came to transact. Their function was to applaud at the proper times and to carry out the agreements made in private conference rooms. These anonymous figures were present in every state delegation; they were significant as groups and never as individuals. For example, most of the delegates from New York were the disciplined followers of Thurlow Weed, "Lucifer of the Lobby," boss of the state Republican machine, whose henchmen in the last legislature had been deeply involved in the corrupt awarding of street railway franchises. This may have been a source of the huge funds New Yorkers boasted they would use in nominating and electing their favorite, Senator William H. Seward. Among Weed's henchmen were politicians "of the lower sort" who were, according to one reporter, able to "drink as much whiskey, swear as loud and long, sing as bad songs, and 'get up and howl' as ferociously as any crowd of Democrats. . . . They are opposed, as they say, 'to being too d–d virtuous.' " Accompanying the official delegates from New York were several thousand professional applauders and marchers under the supervision of one Tom Hyer, a celebrated prize fighter.[5]

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[3] Halstead, p. 121; Ray, pp. 5–9; John Tweedy, *A History of the Republican National Conventions from 1856 to 1908* (Danbury, Conn., 1910), pp. 38–39; John G. Nicolay and John Hay, *Abraham Lincoln, A History* (New York, 1890), II, 265.

[4] James Ford Rhodes, *History of the United States from the Compromise of 1850* (New York, 1896–1919), II, 457.

[5] Halstead, pp. 140–141; Frederic Bancroft and William A. Dunning, eds., *The Remi-*

The other delegations were hardly less colorful. The Illinois group was thoroughly controlled by Abraham Lincoln's campaign managers, who were also political realists. They too were accompanied by thousands of leather-lunged Lincoln shouters. The Pennsylvania friends of Senator Simon Cameron soon demonstrated that their mentor had trained them well in the art of practical politics. Also present were men from the border slave states who had become delegates in devious ways and represented phantom constituencies. There was even a Texas delegation—recruited in Michigan among the friends of Seward.[6]

Since so many of these loyal Republicans had come to Chicago merely to vote and shout and not to think, they behaved as though they were on a glorious excursion which temporarily freed them from the restraints of home and fireside. Murat Halstead, the brilliant reporter for the Cincinnati *Commercial*, related scenes which have long since become familiar to convention-goers. Halstead traveled to Chicago on a train loaded with delegates and their friends. He found some Republicans pained by the "disposition to use ardent spirits" shown by members of this "supposed to be virtuous party." The pious were "thrown into prayers and perspiration" by revelers who were "singing songs not found in hymn-books."[7]

On the night before the convention opened, the men who shared Halstead's hotel room were in "magnificent condition." In the morning he was aroused by a "vehement debate among them, and . . . discovered that they were sitting up in bed playing cards to see who should pay for gin-cocktails all around, the cocktails being an indispensable preliminary to breakfast." The second night the New Yorkers were "raising h—l generally," with champagne flowing "freely as water" at their headquarters. At two o'clock in the morning the Missouri delegates were "singing songs in their parlor," and "the glasses were still clinking in the bar rooms—and far down the street a brass band was making the night musical."[8]

As the convention was about to adjourn on the last day, the presiding officer commended the delegates for their "solemn purpose," their "sober judgments, . . . calm deliberations, after a . . . discussion, free, frank, brotherly and patriotic."[9] None was more aware than the chairman himself of how grotesquely his description had distorted much of the business of the convention. For many of the men who sat on the stage of the Wigwam behaved as though they had not the slightest comprehension of the magnitude of the growing national crisis. Each of the sessions had its full quota of disorder, horseplay, bickering on small points of procedure, and hollow oratory.

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niscences of Carl Schurz (New York, 1907), II, 176–177; Glyndon G. Van Deusen, *Thurlow Weed: Wizard of the Lobby* (New York, 1947), pp. 245–247, 250.

[6] Luthin, pp. 136–138; Fite, p. 123; William E. Smith, *The Francis Preston Blair Family in Politics* (New York, 1933), I, 474–475.

[7] Halstead, p. 121.

[8] Halstead, pp. 122, 131–132, 140–141.

[9] *Proceedings*, p. 169.

On the opening day much time was consumed in a discussion of whether the delegates should temporarily abandon their duties and accept an invitation from the Chicago Board of Trade to enjoy an excursion on Lake Michigan. After a turbulent, time-consuming debate, the excursion was finally put off until evening.[10] The official proceedings record other unseemly episodes, such as the controversy over the number of votes to be required to nominate a presidential candidate:

> Mr. Goodrich, of Minnesota, I move that the representatives . . . of Pennsylvania be excused from voting upon their own proposition. [Hisses and confusion.] . . .
>
> Mr. Reeder [of Pennsylvania] . . . Did I understand a gentleman just now to intimate that Pennsylvania was not entitled to a vote upon this floor? If he did, I should be glad to know who he is, and where he comes from. [Immense applause and cries of "Goodrich."]
>
> Mr. Goodrich, I rise, Mr. President—[Cries of "Sit down," and hisses.] I will.
>
> The President—Gentlemen do not forget yourselves. You must keep order.
>
> Mr. Goodrich, Mr. President—[Cries of "Sit down," and hisses.] I will not sit down. [Confusion.]
>
> The President— . . . Let us act, gentlemen, in a friendly spirit, and if men make remarks that are not exactly correct, let them be forgotten on the moment.[11]

After listening to the debate upon the report of the committee on credentials, a reporter concluded: "There has not been in any previous Republican Convention sharp-shooting so keen, and sarcasm so bitter and incisive. The Convention is very like the old Democratic article. . . . The truth is the Republican party is rapidly becoming Democratized in its style of operations."[12]

On some occasions long-suffering delegates deserved a measure of sympathy when they grew restless or openly rebelled against the turgid eloquence of their colleagues. They would cry out impatiently, "No speech," "Time," "Sit down," or "Dry up." Once the secretary recorded that the members became so "vociferous in their calls to proceed to business [that] the speaker could proceed no further." When one delegate complained about being treated so rudely by his political friends, an anonymous voice retorted: "If you are our friend let us adjourn."[13]

Yet the record of this convention is not entirely one of roistering, disorder, empty oratory, and irresponsible action by boss-ruled puppets. Nor were all the delegates obscure ward heelers oblivious of their national responsibilities, cynical about party principles, devoid of motives higher than the spoils of office, and without reasonable political ethics. Some of them still reflected the idealism of the crusade against the Slave Power and were devoted to a general program of nineteenth century middle-class liberalism. Even some of the more "practical" delegates were models of respectability, and many of them were distinguished party leaders.

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[10] *Proceedings*, pp. 91, 97–100.

[11] *Proceedings*, p. 130.

[12] Halstead, pp. 133–134.

[13] *Proceedings*, pp. 127–128, 167.

Among the Republicans who participated in the Chicago convention was David Wilmot of Pennsylvania, whose historic Proviso had precipitated the controversy over slavery expansion during the Mexican War. George Ashmun of Massachusetts served as permanent chairman and presided with great skill and tact. His "clear, full-toned voice was one refreshing to hear amid the clamors of a Convention."[14] Other prominent delegates included such implacable foes of slavery as Joshua R. Giddings of Ohio and John A. Andrew of Massachusetts; Carl Schurz, the distinguished German-American orator from Wisconsin; Eli Thayer of Massachusetts, promoter of the New England Emigrant Aid Society, now serving as a delegate from Oregon; and Horace Greeley of the New York *Tribune*, also representing Oregon. Even the New York delegation was sprinkled with well-known businessmen, jurists, orators, writers, and statesmen, such as William M. Evarts, John A. King, John L. Schoolcraft, George William Curtis, William Curtis Noyes, and James W. Nye.[15]

The convention's personnel, then, was a mixture of opportunists and idealists, of "practical" conservatives and antislavery radicals, of unsavory tools of political bosses and untrammeled statesmen. Though crusading reformers were not in the majority, they were far from a negligible force. The Republican party of 1860 was "organized for victory and spoils," but it did not lack "higher aims." It was still partially dedicated to "freedom," and it was still reflecting the ideals of northern "free" society.[16]

How did these Republican delegates interpret party policy and national issues in their public discussions on the convention floor? As in most gatherings of this size, more than four-fifths of them had nothing to say at all. Of the 466 delegates, only 83 were formally recognized by the chair on one or more occasions during the three days that the convention met. Of these eighty-three, the majority merely made parliamentary motions or spoke briefly on matters relating to procedure. This left the elaboration of broader questions to a handful of speakers.

Only a few of these speakers extended their remarks to unreasonable lengths. In spite of repeated instances of impatience and disorder when delegates spoke at inopportune moments and thus delayed proceedings, or when their discourses were meaningless and trite, the able orators were listened to with interest and enthusiasm. Political oratory was still a favorite popular diversion, and the audience in the Wigwam would have been disappointed if this form of entertainment had not been provided by some of the celebrated Republican spellbinders. Even the overflow crowd outside begged the chairman "to send out some effective speakers to entertain twenty thousand Republicans and their wives."[17] Hence such men as John A. Andrew, Joshua R. Giddings, Carl Schurz, and George William Curtis had no fear of imposing upon their friends when they rose to speak. They addressed a sympathetic and receptive crowd, and they were repeatedly rewarded with loud applause.

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[14] Halstead, p. 129. D. D. Pratt of Indiana served as reading clerk. A Chicago *Tribune* reporter described him as a man "endowed with lungs of brass and clarion vocal powers, the one never tiring and the other superior to all competing sounds" (in Ray, p. 21).

[15] Halstead, p. 141; Van Deusen, p. 250; Luthin, pp., 136–137. A full list of the delegates is printed in *Proceedings*, pp. 170–174.

[16] Frederic Bancroft, *Life of William H. Seward* (New York, 1900), I, 529–531.

In the formal speeches of these men certain ideas and concepts were constantly reiterated. To be sure, much of what they said was characteristic of the oratory at all political conventions. But these articulate delegates also explained the issues of 1860 as they understood them and defined the positions they hoped their party would take. Their remarks indicated the manner in which Republicans would bid for popular support; and they demonstrated how well they understood the prejudices and social aspirations of the northern people. Their contribution to the education of the electorate may be fairly judged by what they taught on the stage of the Wigwam.

Nearly every speaker assured the voters that Republicans were fully aware of the solemnity of the occasion and the gravity of the national crisis. "The favorite word in the Convention is 'solemn,' " wrote one reporter. "Everything is solemn. . . . Here there is something every ten minutes found to be solemn."[18] When Edwin D. Morgan, chairman of the Republican National Committee, called the convention to order on the first day, he at once pointed to the "momentous results" that hinged upon its proceedings. "No body of men of equal number was ever clothed with greater responsibility than those now within the hearing of my voice." In his "keynote" address, David Wilmot, the temporary chairman, stressed the "importance of the occasion," the "high duties" which devolved upon the delegates.[19] No political convention has ever belittled the urgency of its task, but the Republican party was the very creature of crisis. At this time it was hardly possible to exaggerate the critical nature of its role. George Ashmun reminded the delegates of this fact when he took the chair as permanent president:

> . . . Gentlemen, we have come here to-day at the call of our country from widely separated homes, to fulfill a great and important duty. No ordinary call has brought us together. Nothing but a momentous question would have called this vast multitude here to-day. Nothing but a deep sense of the danger into which our government is fast running could have rallied the people thus . . . The sacrifice which most of us have made in the extended journey, and in the time devoted to it, could only have been made upon some solemn call; and the stern

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[17] *Proceedings,* p. 108.
[18] Halstead, p. 131.
[19] *Proceedings,* pp. 84–86.

look which I see, the solemn look which I see on every face, and the earnest behavior which has been manifested in all the preliminary discussions, shows full well that we all have a true, deep sense of the solemn obligation which is resting upon us.[20]

Another common theme in convention oratory is political harmony. Whatever the facts may be, it is vitally important to convince the electorate that complete argeement and unity of purpose exists within the party. The Republican speakers of 1860 were no exception. Harmony, said Ashmun, was the "striking feature" of the convention. He praised the delegates for their spirit of "brotherly kindness . . . which marked every conversation and every discussion, showing a desire for nothing else but their country's good." He had heard not "one unkind word uttered by one man towards another." A facetious reporter, seeking an explanation for Ashmun's unrealistic appraisal, suggested that he "must have kept very close," or that his hearing was "deplorably impaired."[21] But the convention's president had conveyed an impression essential to victory.

Convention speakers, especially those representing the minority party, never fail to exploit the blunders of their opponents, or to equate political victory with national salvation. This the Republicans did with enthusiasm. Even the call for the convention had invited the support of all who opposed "federal corruption and usurpation." Morgan of New York referred to the "stupendous wrongs, absolutely shocking to the moral sentiment of the country, . . . fastened upon the people by the party in power." The mission of the Republicans, said another delegate, was to rescue the government "from the deep degradation" into which it had fallen. He impeached the Buchanan administration "of the highest crimes which can be committed against a Constitutional government, against a free people, and against humanity. [Prolonged cheers.] The catalogue of its crimes . . . is written upon every page of [its] history."[22] It was certainly time for a change!

That the Republican party was the party of the people, the defender of democratic institutions, was a major text of most of the speeches. Ashmun called his colleagues "delegates of the people." They were performing "the great work which the American people [had] given into [their] hands to do," work which would be done "with the help of the people." Norman B. Judd of Illinois, as a token of this support, presented the chairman with a gavel carved by "one of the working mechanic Republicans of Chicago," who thus showed his "warmth and zeal in the Republican Cause."[23]

This "People's party" (the name still used by Pennsylvania Republicans) was mobilized against the "sham Democracy" which had fallen under the control of arrogant southern aristocrats. These aristocrats had established a merciless tyranny in their own section. Delegates from border slave states frequently described the dangers they endured for professing Republican principles in the South, and they received generous praise from their colleagues in the North.[24] Chauncey F. Cleveland of Connecticut insisted that many southern voters sympathized with the Republicans but dared not avow their sentiments. The duty of his party was to get these Southerners "out from under the heel of the slave oligarchy."[25]

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[20] *Proceedings*, pp. 101–102.

[21] *Proceedings*, p. 102; Halstead, p. 129.

[22] *Proceedings*, pp. 83–85, 101–102.

[23] *Proceedings*, 101–102, 103–104.

Even more urgent, Republican speakers contended, was the need to prevent slaveholders from spreading their despotic rule over the whole nation. Their ultimate purpose was to destroy the liberties of all the people. A great "aristocratic party" had "for years dominated with a high hand over the political affairs of this country." They would impose "a despotism more dreadful, and grasping and audacious than that of Naples, Austria or Russia"; they were guilty of "lawless violence, of tyranny such as the world never saw in a civilized and Christianized land."[26] Joshua R. Giddings offered a resolution which expressed sympathy for those who had been driven from their homes in the South "on account of their opinions," and which accused the Democrats of failing to defend the civil rights of American citizens. Hence, said Orville H. Browning of Illinois, the preservation of "free institutions" was at stake in this contest.[27]

And yet, though Republicans painted terrifying pictures of aggressive slaveholders, frontal attacks upon slavery and demands for its abolition were strikingly absent from their convention oratory. One reporter observed: "We only occasionally hear the sentimental twang, the puritanical intonation that indicates the ancient and savory article of anti-slaveryism."[28] Few speakers would risk offending conservative Northerners on this issue. Their assaults were directed not against slavery but against the slave power. It was in defiance of "the whole slave power and the whole vassalage of hell" that men such as Carl Schurz spoke.[29]

Again, in contrast to the convention of 1856, the generally more discreet speakers of 1860 did not even stress Republican determination to use congressional power to exclude slavery from the territories. Instead they harped upon the need to defend "freedom" from the new doctrine, proclaimed by the Supreme Court in the Dred Scott decision, that the Constitution of itself opened all the territories to slavery. This decision was part of the plot of the "filibustering, Slavery-extending, sham Democracy" to "guarantee to slavery perpetual existence and unlimited empire," to reopen the African slave trade, to pass a national slave code, and to plant Negro servitude

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[24] See, for example, speech of Charles Lee Armour of Maryland, *Proceedings*, p. 113.

[25] *Proceedings*, pp. 118–119.

[26] *Proceedings*, pp. 85–86, 127–128.

[27] *Proceedings*, pp. 159, 165.

[28] Halstead, p. 134.

[29] *Proceedings*, p. 157.

"wherever the banner of this Union floats."[30] The Democratic party, said Andrew of Massachusetts, "exists only to-day in two sections, one of which is absolutely devoted to slavery, and the other of which is opposed to liberty. [Loud cheers and laughter.]"[31]

It followed, therefore, that the Democracy, devoted to the interests of southern slaveholders, was the real sectional party. Republicans shrewdly exploited this thesis in order to absolve themselves from charges of sectionalism. The Republican program, they said, was truly national, for it encompassed the needs of the whole country. Its aim was "to resist . . . [the] policy of a sectional interest," to defeat "the leaders of a sectional party."[32] Andrew declared: "The Republican party is to-day, gentlemen, the only united national party in America. . . . [It] is the only party in the nation which stands by the Union and holds no secessionists in its ranks. Now, since the result . . . is known of the Convention at Charleston, the Democratic party is the only secession party in existence."[33]

The presence of delegates from the border slave states was warmly commended by various speakers, for this seemed to validate their disavowals of sectionalism. Some even predicted a further rapid growth of their party throughout the South. Others gave assurances that no attack upon southern institutions was contemplated. Chauncey F. Cleveland told Southerners that their rights would be respected: "I say, sir, and I wish it to be understood everywhere, I am not here for the purpose of making war on the slave states, nor do I believe that there is a man in this house who is. We have been charged with that. It is false and they know it. We are here for the purpose of satisfying the American people that we are willing to give the slave states their entire rights."[34]

Another means of establishing the conservatism and respectability of the Republican party was to identify it with the sanctified doctrines of the Founding Fathers. The convention call announced the party's desire to restore "the federal administration to a system of rigid economy and to the principles of Washington and Jefferson." Orville H. Browning believed that Republicans cherished "the same principles which embalmed the hearts and nerved the arms of our patriot sires of the Revolution; . . . the same principles which were vindicated upon every battlefield of American freedom."[35] "Fortunately," said Morgan of New York, "you are not required to enunciate new and untried principles of government. This has been well and wisely done by the statesmen of the Revolution. [Applause.] Stand where they stood, avowing and maintaining the like objects and doctrines;

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[30] *Proceedings*, pp. 83–86; address signed by F. P. Blair, Horace Greeley, John D. Defrees, and others, in *The New York Times*, May 15, 1860.

[31] *Proceedings*, p. 157.

[32] *Proceedings*, pp. 83–86.

[33] *Proceedings*, p. 157.

[34] *Proceedings*, p. 119.

[35] *Proceedings*, pp. 83–84, 159.

then will the end sought be accomplished; the Constitution and the Union be preserved, and the government be administered by patriots and statesmen."[36] And Wilmot proclaimed: "It is our purpose to restore the Constitution to its original meaning; to give to it its true interpretation; to read that instrument as our fathers read it." The country would return to "those broad constitutional doctrines that were recognized for the first sixty years of the existence of our government."[37]

In many ways, then, convention speakers attempted to make their appeal broad enough to attract every shade and variety of opposition to the Democracy, and to assure voters that the Republican party was basically sound and conservative. This purpose was also clearly evident in the party platform. Horace Greeley, who served on the platform committee, admitted that Republicans could not win "on a square slavery issue." And so the document made a bid for the support of several powerful economic groups on other grounds. To the manufacturing interests of the East, particularly of Pennsylvania and New Jersey, it promised an adjustment of the tariff to provide increased protection; to western farmers it promised legislation providing for free homesteads on the public domain; and to both of these groups it promised to facilitate trade by subsidizing internal improvements, including a Pacific railroad.[38] The convention secretary recorded that the reading of the platform "was interrupted by tremendous outbursts of applause—the most enthusiastic and long continued being given to the tariff and homestead clauses."[39]

The increased power of "practical" and conservative Republicans was evident in those portions of the platform which related to slavery. In 1856 Republicans had affirmed that Congress, in exercising its "sovereign power" over the territories, had "the right and the imperative duty . . . to prohibit . . . those twin relics of barbarism—Polygamy and Slavery."[40] In 1860 this clause was dropped. The new platform promised to respect "the right of each state to order and control its own domestic institutions according to its own judgment exclusively." It stated less directly and less positively that slavery ought to be excluded from the territories. The platform denounced as a "dangerous political heresy" "the new dogma that the Constitution, of its own force, carries slavery into any or all of the territories of the United States." It proclaimed that the "normal condition" of the territories was "that of freedom," and it denied "the authority of Congress, of a territorial legislature, or of any individuals, to give legal existence to slavery in any territory . . ." It took more words to be more obscure.

In the original report of the platform committee there was another significant and revealing change. In contrast to the document prepared in 1856, this committee failed to incorporate the bold statement from the Declaration of Independence: "That all men are created equal; that they are endowed by their Creator with certain inalienable rights; that among these are life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness . . ." But this retreat was more than such veterans of the antislavery crusade as Joshua R. Giddings could bear. As soon as the platform was read, Giddings was on his feet struggling for recognition amid frantic calls for the previous question. In an impassioned speech he demanded the restoration of those words from Jefferson's immortal document. "I propose," he concluded, "to maintain the fundamental and primal issues upon which the government was founded. . . . I offer this because our party was formed upon it. It has existed upon it—and when you leave out this truth you leave out the party." Giddings won the audience to his side, but his amendment was rejected.[41] It was a tense and dramatic moment. "The old man quickly rose, and made his way slowly toward the door. A dozen delegates begged him not to go. But he considered everything lost, even honor."[42]

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[36] *Proceedings*, p. 85.

[37] *Proceedings*, p. 86.

[38] Jeter A. Isely, *Horace Greeley and the Republican Party* (Princeton, 1947), p. 266; Luthin, pp. 148, 150–151.

[39] *Proceedings*, p. 133.

[40] *Proceedings*, p. 43.

But everything was not yet lost. A few minutes later George William Curtis of New York overcame all points of order and introduced the Giddings amendment again. His eloquent speech provided one of the rare instances when oratory on the floor had a decisive influence upon the convention's proceedings. It was an appeal that the delegates could not ignore:

> . . . I have to ask this Convention whether they are prepared to go upon the record and before the country as voting down the words of the Declaration of Independence? [Cries of "No, no," and applause.] . . . Bear in mind that in Philadelphia in 1856, the Convention of this same great party were not afraid to announce those [principles] by which alone the Republican party lives, and upon which alone the future of this country in the hands of the Republicans is passing. [Tremendous cheering.]
>
> Now, sir, I ask gentlemen gravely to consider that in the amendment which I have proposed, I have done nothing that the soundest and safest man in all the land might not do; and I rise simply . . . to ask gentlemen to think well before, upon the free prairies of the West, in the summer of 1860, they dare to wince and quail before the men who in Philadelphia in 1776—in Philadelphia, in the Arch-Keystone State . . . —before they dare to shrink from repeating the words that these great men enunciated. [Terrific applause.][43]

Curtis's "captivating burst of oratory" apparently "took the convention by storm." The Giddings amendment was now adopted, and the Declaration of Independence again became part of the Republican platform.[44] With "honor" thus saved, Giddings returned to his seat. There were limits beyond which the old antislavery radicals could not be pushed.

[41] *Proceedings*, pp. 133–137; Tweedy, pp. 43–44.

[42] Halstead, pp. 135–136.

[43] *Proceedings*, pp. 140–143.

[44] Halstead, pp. 137–138; Nicolay and Hay, II, 269; Smith, I, 479–480.

However, on the third day, when the presidential candidate was nominated, the conservative advocates of expediency again had things their own way. The selection of Abraham Lincoln was in no sense a triumph for the antislavery idealists in the party. Nor was it the result of a mass movement among rank-and-file party members. Rather, it was achieved through adroit political management, and through the kind of political bargaining that is usually needed to win the prize for a presidential aspirant. Lincoln obtained the nomination in 1860 because he proved to be less offensive to more people than any other candidate, and because so many delegates turned to him as a second choice when they had "to give up their first love."[45] In short, his nomination was the "triumph of availability."[46]

The debates and discussions, the planning and bargaining that preceded the balloting were not, of course, conducted in the open. Ordinary Republicans had little direct influence upon the nomination, and they knew practically nothing of what went on behind the scenes. Only occasionally did the war of the factions spread to the convention floor, and then only the "insiders" knew what was at stake. Thus the opponents of Seward tried to force the adoption of what, in effect, would have constituted a two-thirds rule, which they believed would weaken the New Yorker's position. In this they were defeated. They also demanded a reduction in the number of votes given to slave-state delegations, because most of them were supposed to be in Seward's pocket. On this point the anti-Seward men won a partial victory.[47] But for the most part, the maneuvering was carried on in private caucuses and secret conferences behind the closed doors of hotel rooms.

As late as the morning of the balloting, Seward continued to be the leading candidate, and most observers regarded his nomination as almost inevitable. Seward came closer than any other candidate to being the popular favorite among Republicans throughout the country. Thurlow Weed, his close friend and political manager, handled the preparations before and during the convention with great skill. Seward had the solid support of the delegations from New York, Michigan, Wisconsin, and Minnesota, and much strength in many others. Weed dispensed champagne and cigars freely at his Chicago headquarters; he was generous in his promises of political rewards; and he vowed that he had ample funds to wage successful campaigns in various key states. Hence Seward's partisans looked to the outcome with confidence.[48]

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[45] That this was Lincoln's strategy is revealed in a letter to Samuel Galloway, March 24, 1860 (John G. Nicolay and John Hay, eds., *Complete Works of Abraham Lincoln* [New York, 1905], VI, 7–8).

[46] Halstead, p. 153.

[47] *Proceedings,* pp. 109–130.

[48] Schurz, *Reminiscences,* II, 176; Thurlow Weed Barnes, ed., *Memoir of Thurlow Weed* (Boston, 1884), p. 262; Van Deusen, pp. 247–249, 251; Luthin, p. 141. As late as 11:40 P.M. of May 17, the night before the balloting, Greeley reported that Seward would be nominated (New York *Semi-Weekly Tribune,* May 18, 1860).

But Seward also had some weaknesses. Many feared that the notorious corruption of the last New York legislature, and the suspicion that some of Weed's funds came from that source, might compromise Republicans during the campaign.[49] Also dangerous to Seward was the fact that a group of party leaders from his own state was opposed to him. This faction was headed by Greeley, who sought to punish Weed and Seward for failing to recognize his own political ambitions, and who exerted considerable influence among the delegates at Chicago.[50] Moreover, Seward had antagonized the Know-Nothing element earlier in his career. Finally, and most important of all, this expounder of the "irrepressible conflict" doctrine was regarded, probably unjustly, as the very symbol of Republican radicalism. The need to gain the support of conservative northern Whigs, the need to win the four "doubtful" states of New Jersey, Pennsylvania, Indiana, and Illinois (all of which Republicans had lost in 1856), seriously damaged Seward's chances. He did not have a majority of the delegates pledged to him, and this could be fatal *if* the opposition could unite behind one candidate.

This was the objective which Lincoln's managers set out to achieve: to win the support of anti-Seward delegates, to convince them that there was no other way to block Seward's nomination. And in the kind of work that had to be done to gain this result, Judge David Davis and Norman B. Judd, the leaders of the Lincoln forces, proved to be just as adept as Weed. They too made careful preparations before the convention met, and they brought up an Illinois delegation unanimously pledged to Lincoln. Months before, they had begun the job of winning friends in other states.[51]

The "unavailability" of Lincoln's other rivals was stressed. Salmon P. Chase of Ohio, like Seward, was too radical. Lincoln was a moderate, an ex-Whig from a "doubtful" state. Edward Bates of Missouri was far too conservative ever to be acceptable to antislavery Republicans, and, as a former Know-Nothing, he would lose the support of the powerful German element in the Northwest. Lincoln was less conservative than Bates—at least his "House Divided" speech of 1858 would please the radicals. Lincoln had never joined the Know-Nothings, and so he was not offensive to the Germans. Simon Cameron of Pennsylvania, the only other serious rival, had an unsavory political reputation. Besides, Lincoln was sound on the tariff, the issue which most interested Pennsylvanians.[52] Arguments such as these eventually began to increase Lincoln's strength.

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[49] *The New York Times*, May 25, 1860; Luthin, p. 154.

[50] *The New York Times*, May 25, 1860; Isely, pp. 276–286; Barnes, pp. 273–276.

[51] Norman B. Judd to Lyman Trumbull, Apr. 2, 1860 (Lyman Trumbull Papers, Library of Congress; microfilms in Univ. of California Library, Berkeley); Baringer, pp. 184–187; James G. Randall, *Lincoln the President* (New York, 1945), I, 169. For Lincoln's efforts in his own behalf see Luthin, pp. 86–87; Gilbert A. Tracy, ed., *Uncollected Letters of Abraham Lincoln* (Boston, 1917), pp. 135, 142; Paul M. Angle, ed., *New Letters and Papers of Lincoln* (Boston, 1930), pp. 242–243; Lincoln, *Complete Works*, VI, 5–6, 10. For reports of the maneuvers of Lincoln's managers at the convention see David C. Mearns, ed., *The Lincoln Papers* (New York, 1948), I, 232–241.

Lincoln's managers also did effective work in the various caucuses, especially in those of the "doubtful" states. "They are suing us and wooing us," reported an Indiana delegate. At these meetings the Lincolnites repeatedly outmaneuvered the partisans of both Bates and Seward. Gustave Koerner of Illinois brandished threats of a German bolt in the event that Bates should be nominated. Orville H. Browning argued persuasively that only Lincoln could command the confidence of all anti-Democratic factions.[53] Thus, by the evening of the second day Lincoln had clearly become Seward's most dangerous rival.

But after the convention adjourned that night much still had to be done. What happened then was best described by Murat Halstead: "There were hundreds of Pennsylvanians, Indianians and Illinoisans, who never closed their eyes that night." Halstead saw Henry S. Lane, Republican candidate for governor in Indiana, at one o'clock in the morning, "pale and haggard, with cane under his arm, walking as if for a wager, from one caucus room to another, at the Tremont House." The objective of Lane and his friends was "to bring the delegates . . . to consider success rather than Seward," and it was this appeal that finally caused the "fatal break" in Seward's ranks. "It was reported, and with a well-understood purpose, that the Republican candidates for Governor in Indiana, Illinois and Pennsylvania would resign, if Seward were nominated. . . . Henry S. Lane . . . asserted hundreds of times that the nomination of Seward would be death to him, and that he might in that case just as well give up the canvass."[54] Lincoln's managers completed their private bargaining with some specific pledges. Caleb B. Smith and Simon Cameron were promised cabinet posts for the delivery of the votes of Indiana and Pennsylvania. Lincoln was alleged to have said: "They have gambled me all around, bought and sold me a hundred times."[55] Whatever his personal feelings on the matter, these pledges were subsequently honored.

The final coup was delivered on Friday morning, May 18, just before the nominations. While Seward's friends were jauntily parading the streets of Chicago, Lincoln's managers were quietly distributing newly printed admission tickets to their Illinois friends, some of whom had fabulous reputations as bellowers. When the Seward men arrived, they found the Wigwam already filled with the organized supporters of Lincoln. It has been said, perhaps with some validity, that this was the first time that "artificially manufactured noise from thousands of throats intimidated, and to some extent governed the deliberations of a national political convention."[56] Most of Seward's noisemakers never had a chance to demonstrate their powers, for they stood disconsolately in the streets outside.

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[52] Luthin, pp. 146–147, 154–155; Randall, I, 153; Lee F. Crippen, *Simon Cameron: Ante-Bellum Years* (Oxford, Ohio, 1942), pp. 207–213.

[53] Kenneth M. Stampp, *Indiana Politics During the Civil War* (Indianapolis, 1949), pp. 38–39; Luthin, pp. 142–143, 158–159; Howard K. Beale, ed., *The Diary of Edward Bates, 1859–1866, American Historical Association Annual Report*, 1930, IV (Washington, 1933), 130–131; Crippen, pp. 214–216; Smith, pp. 476–477; Thomas J. McCormack, ed., *Memoirs of Gustave Koerner, 1809–1896* (Cedar Rapids, 1909), II, 87–89. For the influence of the German-American Conference at the Deutsches Haus in Chicago on May 14–15, see *The New York Times*, May 15, 16, 1860; Randall, I, 161–163.

[54] Halstead, pp. 141–143.

[55] Charles Roll, "Indiana's Part in the Nomination of Abraham Lincoln for President in 1860," *Indiana Mag. of History*, XXV (1929), 1–13; Stampp, p. 39; Luthin, pp. 141–142, 158; Ovando J. Hollister, *Life of Schuyler Colfax* (New York, 1886), p. 147 *n.*

The names of the candidates were presented quickly and without the long, tedious speeches that have since become customary. Judd offered Lincoln's name simply thus: "I desire, on behalf of the delegation from Illinois, to put in nomination, as a candidate for President of the United States, Abraham Lincoln, of Illinois."[57] It was the demonstrations by the delegates and audience that took time, and in this the Lincolnites exceeded all others. The response to the seconding of Lincoln's nomination by a delegate from Ohio brought the climax: "Imagine all the hogs ever slaughtered in Cincinnati giving their death squeals together, a score of big steam whistles going . . . and you conceive something of the same nature." Lane of Indiana "leaped upon a table, and swinging hat and cane, performed like an acrobat."[58]

The balloting proceeded amid tense excitement. Finally, on the third ballot, Lincoln came within one and a half votes of a majority. "In about ten ticks of a watch, [David K.] Cartter of Ohio was up. . . . Every eye was on Cartter, and every body who understood the matter at all, knew what he was about to do. . . . He said, 'I rise (eh), Mr. Chairman (eh), to announce the change of four votes of Ohio from Mr. Chase to Mr. Lincoln.' The deed was done." After a moment's silence, "there was a noise in the wigwam like the rush of a great wind, in the van of a storm—and in another breath, the storm was there. There were thousands cheering with the energy of insanity."[59] In this wild throng only the New York delegates sat in gloomy silence. Tears filled the eyes of Thurlow Weed as his labors of two years ended in defeat. But on the face of Horace Greeley was a smile of triumph.[60]

Lincoln's historical reputation makes it difficult to understand the risk Republicans took when they nominated him at that critical time.[61] He had no administrative experience; his service in office consisted of four terms in the Illinois legislature and one term in the House of Representatives; he had yet to demonstrate a capacity for statesmanship. It is significant that Lincoln's champions, in the many caucuses and conferences, never resorted to arguments based upon his relative ability as compared with the other candidates. They did not contend that he would be a superior administrator, that he had superior intellectual capacities, that he had greater experience, or that his character was purer. Their appeals were based on availability and expediency; they urged the delegates to nominate the man who could win. They argued that Lincoln could carry the "doubtful" states and that Seward could not.

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[56] Fite, pp. 130–131; Luthin, pp. 160–161; Nicolay and Hay, II, 270; Koerner, *Memoirs*, II, 85; Baringer, pp. 267–268.

[57] *Proceedings*, pp. 148–149.

[58] Halstead, pp. 144–145.

[59] Halstead, pp. 149–150; *Proceedings*, p. 153; Chicago *Tribune*, in Ray, p. 34.

[60] Van Deusen, pp. 253–254; Luthin, p. 166. For Weed's account of the nomination of Lincoln, see his letter to Seward, May 20, 1860 (edited by Glyndon G. Van Deusen in *Mississippi Valley Historical Rev.*, XXXIV (1947), 101–104). In the afternoon, after Lincoln's nomination, Senator Hannibal Hamlin of Maine was nominated for the vice-presidency.

[61] Baringer, p. 312.

The strategy of those who favored other candidates was rarely less practical. Weed once tried another kind of appeal when he spoke to the delegates from Kansas. He pointed with pride to Seward's record as governor and United States senator. In times of crisis, he said, the nation had special need for a president with "the highest order of executive ability, a man of real statesmanlike qualities, well known to the Country, and of large experience in national affairs."[62] But no one knew better than Weed that such considerations were quite irrelevant, and that it would be fatal to rest Seward's case upon them. Hence he put far more emphasis upon the funds he had with which to wage campaigns in the "doubtful" states.

Seward's prominence and long participation in national politics, if anything, lessened his availability as a presidential candidate. His positions on national issues were too well known, and he had had time enough to make numerous political enemies. And so, as one disappointed New Yorker complained, "Seward, like Calhoun, like Clay, and like Webster, was slaughtered in the home of his friends, and . . . expediency had done for him what it always has done for the great men of this confederacy."[63] It is doubtful that Seward would in fact have been a better president than Lincoln. But such a judgment can only be credited to hindsight, not to the foresight of the delegates at Chicago.

Some Republican newspapers did not even know the first name of their candidate; *The New York Times* announced the nomination of "Abram" Lincoln of Illinois.[64] Nevertheless, in the closing hours of the convention, Republican orators already discovered elements of greatness in Lincoln and one of the keys to the popular appeal he would make. They found in him the embodiment of the American success story, the vindication of American institutions, the fulfillment of the promise which Northerners liked to think was held out to "free labor." "Thirty years ago on the Southern frontier of Indiana," said Caleb Smith, there could have been seen "a humble, ragged boy, bare footed, driving his oxen through the hills, and he has elevated himself to the pinnacle which has now presented him as the candidate of this convention. It is an illustration of that spirit of enterprise which characterizes the West . . ." Lane called the Illinois railsplitter the "most beautiful illustration of the power of free institutions and the doctrine of free labor in the United States."[65]

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[62] Baringer, pp. 222–223.

[63] Letter from "Howard" in *The New York Times,* May 21, 1860.

[64] May 19, 1860.

The business of the convention was finished. After "the usual stump speeches . . . complimentary resolutions . . . and the 'three times three' . . . for the candidate," the delegates went home.[66] Their public discussions on the floor of the Wigwam, vague though they were on many points, had faithfully reflected the thoughts and aspirations of a large segment of the northern people. Their private caucuses revealed the normal behavior of professional politicians in a party that was fast becoming institutionalized. The Chicago convention provided a fair illustration of political democracy at work in mid-nineteenth-century America. The lust for office, the interests of powerful economic groups, and the middle-class ideals of northern society all played a part in shaping its deliberations. The forces that were driving the country to disunion and war were, after all, beyond the control of this single small body of men.

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[65] *Proceedings,* pp. 163, 165.

[66] Halstead, p. 153.

Springfield Lincoln Rally, 1860

HALBERT E. GULLEY

13

I

By 1860 Illinois was emerging as a political power in the nation. The states of the Northwest had wielded an influence in national politics for some years, especially after 1840; in 1860 the rising Republican party recognized the trend westward by holding its nominating convention in Chicago. The choice of Lincoln underlined the trend and gave Illinois Republicans an opportunity to demonstrate their frenzied enthusiasm for this favorite son.

Political excitement was easy to generate since the issues elicited strong party feeling.[1] Moreover, politics supplied sport and entertainment and enlivened the "humdrum life which was the usual order of the prairie."[2] During the campaign, Republicans sponsored mass meetings throughout the state, at least sixty of which drew crowds of five thousand. Rallies at Chicago, De Kalb, Galesburg, Mattoon, Ottawa, Peoria, and Rockbridge each attracted more than twenty-five thousand cheering partisans.[3]

The largest downstate gathering was the rally held in Springfield on August 8. The withdrawal of the candidate for lieutenant governor, due to poor health, made it necessary to reconvene the state nominating convention[4] and Republicans seized this excuse for a mammoth state-wide Lincoln demonstration in Springfield, his home town, the state capital.

They were determined to make the Springfield meeting "the outstanding event of the whole canvass."[5] In mid-July, the *Illinois State Journal*, party voice in the capital, began strenuous exertions to attract masses of voters. Each day it carried a one-column advertisement on its editorial page proclaiming the "State Convention and mass-meeting" and listing the speakers who had been invited: Thomas Corwin and D. K. Cartter of Ohio; Schuyler Colfax and C. B. Smith of Indiana; Edward Bates and F. P. Blair, Jr., of Missouri; Carl Schurz and J. R. Doolittle of Wisconsin; Ossian E. Dodge of Iowa; and Lyman Trumbull, Richard Yates, John M. Palmer, Norman B. Judd, Leonard Swett, and Gustave Koerner of Illinois.[6]

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[1] As Colonel John W. Vinson later expressed it, "unless one has passed through the political campaigns of those years, it is not possible to fully realize the intense excitement that then prevailed." ("Personal Reminiscences of Mr. Lincoln," *Jour. of the Illinois Historical Society*, 8 (1915), 572–587.)

[2] William E. Baringer, "Campaign Techniques in Illinois in 1860," *Trans. of the Illinois State Historical Society* (1932), 244.

[3] Harold P. James, "Lincoln's Own State in the Election of 1860," unpub. diss. (Univ. of Illinois, 1943), pp. 323 ff.

[4] *Illinois State Journal*, May 15, June 2, July 2, July 12, 1860.

[5] James, p. 341.

Wide-Awake Companies were invited to send marching units for "a procession miles and miles in length."[7] Groups at Alton, Carlinville, Jacksonville, Lincoln, Bloomington, Aurora, Elgin, Chicago, Decatur, and many other cities, including some in Wisconsin and Missouri, accepted. Decatur expected to send more than a thousand, Chicago, sixteen hundred. Railroads cooperated by offering half-fare excursion tickets.

The weather on August 8 was warm and clear. Early excursion trains and wagon caravans began pouring people into the city. William H. Smith, then a boy of fifteen, wrote years later of the exciting trip to the capital. His father had two hundred acres of wheat to sow, but the crops could not keep him away. He took along five hired men "to swell the procession." They traveled by wagon the sixty miles from Christian County, joining other wagons and riders along the way. By the second night of their encampment, the caravan was more than seven miles long.[8]

At nine o'clock Wide-Awake Companies, decorated wagons, horsemen, and marchers paraded through the streets in a procession that required two and a half hours to file past Lincoln's home.[9] About noon, part of the throng started assembling in the fairgrounds on the western edge of the city, where the afternoon speeches were to begin at two o'clock. There were thousands of people, "covering acres of ground";[10] yet the tide of people in the city streets appeared undiminished.[11] Estimates of the fairground crowd ranged from 25,000 to 75,000.[12] Even those who planned the rally were "astounded at the numbers of the multitude."[13] The opposition Springfield *Register*, acknowledging an assembly of 30,000, maintained that 6000 to 8000 were Douglas men, but reported: "That the demonstration was large and imposing we do not intend to deny."[14]

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[6] Many of these speakers did not attend. The *Illinois State Register*, Democratic newspaper in Springfield, jubilantly declared that the crowd which had gathered "in the hope of hearing some distinguished orators" from out of the state endured a "bitter disappointment." Republicans had boasted of a letter from Tom Corwin stating that he positively would be present, but the *Register* claimed that no such letter was ever written, the Republicans having invented the fiction to increase attendance. (*Illinois State Register*, August 9, 1860.) The embarrassed reaction of loyal Republicans to the absence of the advertised speakers was indicated by one who later applauded the success of the rally and suggested another at Decatur, with ten or fifteen "of our best speakers, and be sure to have them on hand." *Illinois State Journal*, August 16, 1860.)

[7] *Illinois State Journal*, July 16, 1860.

[8] "Old-Time Campaigning and the Story of a Lincoln Campaign Song," *Jour. of the Illinois Historical Society*, 8 (1920), 23.

[9] New York *Herald*, Aug. 12, 1860.

[10] Vinson, p. 575.

[11] New York *Herald*, Aug. 14, 1860.

[12] Orville Browning estimated the crowd at 25,000 to 30,000 (Theodore C. Pease and

II

This enthusiastic audience was "intoxicated with politics," and eager to hear any speaker of whatever skill[15] discuss the issues of the day. It was a cross section of Illinois citizens, with a heavy concentration of men from the central part of the state and more from northern Illinois than from Egypt[16] in the south. The scattered few from Missouri and Wisconsin held views similar to those from southern and northern Illinois. Republicans dominated the audience, obviously, although the *Register* was undoubtedly correct in claiming that a few thousand Douglas supporters were among them.

The attitudes of this audience toward the campaign issues were reasonably clear. There was virtually no disagreement about the importance of preserving the Union. Douglas had boldly opposed "Southern Disunionists" as well as northern abolitionists. Democratic sentiment was indicated also when the southern representatives withdrew from the Charleston Convention; a LaSalle County, Illinois, Democratic Convention condemned the seceders, resolving: "We do not regret their departure from the Democratic fold, as we have no work for disunionists to perform."[17] The Republicans, of course, assailed threats of disunion even more bitterly and often accused the Democrats of working against unity.[18]

In their views on slavery and its extension, the people of Illinois were divided sectionally. Those in the north tended to be antislavery, with a few advocating abolition, while those in Egypt were closer to the South in sympathy, some being violently proslavery. The people of the central portions of the state were more evenly divided in their sentiments.

The division of the nation was "mirrored in miniature" in Illinois. The southern part, bordering on Kentucky and Missouri, had been settled by migrants from Kentucky, Tennessee, and Virginia. Northern Illinois, in contrast, was influenced by free Iowa and Wisconsin and had been settled largely by European immigrants and Easterners.[19]

There were few out-and-out abolitionists in Illinois. Only a few years

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James G. Randall, eds., *The Diary of Orville Hickman Browning* [Springfield, Ill., 1925], I, 421). The *Illinois State Journal* (Aug. 9, 1860) claimed a total attendance of 75,000.

[13] Chicago *Press and Tribune*, Aug. 11, 1860.

[14] Aug. 9, 1860.

[15] Baringer, p. 256; Charles B. Johnson, "The Presidential Campaign of 1860," *Trans. of the Illinois Historical Society* (1927), 117.

[16] The southern portion of the state, usually defined as the area south of a line from St. Louis to Vincennes.

[17] Ottawa (Ill.) *Free Trader*, June 16, 1860, in James, pp. 71–72.

[18] *Illinois State Journal*, Apr. 30, 1860.

[19] James, pp. 20–21.

earlier, Elijah P. Lovejoy had been killed by an Alton mob because he championed abolition, though he said little or nothing that other men had not said.[20] Attitudes were changing, however. The radical antislavery movement was gaining some ground in the state as the campaign of 1860 approached.[21]

Opinion in the state was understandably divided along party lines. Most Illinois Democrats followed Douglas and endorsed popular sovereignty, opposed abolition, and approved the Supreme Court's decision that any citizen could take slaves into the territories as property. They railed against "negro equality." The small faction of anti-Douglas Democrats were rabidly prosouthern, wanted a slave code for the territories, and opposed popular sovereignty.

Republicans thought slavery evil socially, morally, and politically, called it a sectional and not a national problem, and opposed its extension. They favored free labor and felt that Congress had the power to prohibit slavery in states where it existed.[22] One Republican adequately suggested the party's feelings when he cited Douglas' two erroneous assumptions: that slavery is right; and that "the existence or nonexistence . . . of slavery in a territory is a matter in which the people residing in a Territory alone are in any way interested or affected."[23]

All the political parties entered the campaign enthusiastically, but Illinois Republicans felt their chances of winning were infinitely superior and so showed more spirit than their competitors. Even in the Democratic stronghold of southern Illinois, Republican clubs were organized in great numbers. "I hear daily," wrote a Fairfield reporter, "of men who have never acted with the Republicans, openly declaring for Lincoln and Hamlin."[24]

Wooing of men from other allegiances was particularly important in the Republican campaign. A guest editorial in the *Illinois State Journal* trumpeted the nomination of Lincoln because he endorsed the principles of Henry Clay, as did many old-line Whigs, and because he was popular with the members of the American party, hostile to the administration.[25] Also, Lincoln was attracting the German voters, a substantial minority group.[26] Carl

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[20] J. P. Usher, *Reminiscences of Abraham Lincoln,* Allen T. Rice, ed. (New York, 1889), p. 79.

[21] Forest L. Whan, "Stephen A. Douglas," in *A History and Criticism of American Public Address,* W. N. Brigance, ed. (New York, 1943), II, 788.

[22] From a typical resolution passed by a Sangamon County Republican Convention (*Illinois State Journal,* Apr. 30, 1860).

[23] D. G. Hay to Lyman Trumbull, Apr. 2, 1860 (*Trumbull Papers,* Illinois Historical Survey Library, Univ. of Illinois).

[24] John G. Nicolay and John Hay, *Abraham Lincoln* (New York, 1886), II, 283; Baringer, p. 248; *Illinois State Journal,* June 6, 1860.

[25] May 14, 1860.

[26] Gustave Koerner, prominent German-American leader from Belleville, urged the nomination of Lincoln because he could more likely win the support of German Republicans. (T. J. McCormack, ed., *Memoirs of Gustave Koerner* [Cedar Rapids, 1909], II, 87–89.)

Schurz, on a speaking tour of Illinois, wrote his wife from Belleville: "The Germans are coming to our side by hundreds and thousands. If things go everywhere as they did in Egypt, where there were scarcely any Republican votes cast in 1856, Lincoln's election is inevitable."[27]

III

For this rally to honor Lincoln, Republican leaders had planned two sessions of speeches, one in the afternoon at the fairgrounds and a second that night in the newly constructed Wigwam, modeled after the Chicago convention hall that had become a symbol of the campaign.

Speaking stands had been erected in different parts of the fairgrounds, since one speaker could not be heard by all. At the principal stand, Senator Lyman H. Trumbull spoke briefly, although he made his principal speech that evening, along with Gustave Koerner. In the afternoon, Trumbull was followed by Senator Doolittle of Wisconsin; General John Wilson, an Illinoisan; and Orville H. Browning of Quincy.

Lesser Illinois figures addressed the crowd from the other speaking stands. Henry Case, Republican candidate for Congress, a Mr. Cowan of Menard, and a Mr. Ketchum of Morgan "made telling speeches." At the third stand, Richard J. Oglesby of Decatur talked for a full two hours, giving a speech "bristling with sharp points." Joseph Gillespie made a "most eloquent" speech which brought "incessant" cheers from the audience gathered about the fourth platform. Speakers at the fifth stand were Judge John M. Palmer of Macoupin; a Mr. Ferree of Lebanon; a Mr. Linegar, candidate for Congress in the Ninth District; Henry S. Baker of Alton; and a Dr. Dyer of Chicago.[28]

In midafternoon the excitement of the crowd was further heightened by Lincoln's unexpected appearance. He had not intended to speak,[29] but the wild cheering interrupted the speaker at the nearest stand and he was compelled to say a few words. He spoke about ten sentences in simple, direct language, explaining that some had expressed the desire to see their candidate and that he had wanted to see them. Offering gratitude for their enthusiasm, he expressed surprise that his appearance among them "would create the tumult which I now witness." Apparently wishing not to discuss partisan issues, he begged their indulgence in allowing him to remain silent.[30]

Few of the speeches delivered at the rally have been preserved. The *Journal* promised on August 9 that some of the speeches heard at the first stand and taken down in shorthand would "probably" be printed, but only the words of Lincoln, Wilson, and Trumbull were reported. Browning's address appeared in pamphlet form.[31] An analysis of these available speeches will probably at least suggest what the other speakers also said that day.

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[27] July 29, 1860 (Frederic Bancroft, ed., *Speeches, Correspondence and Political Papers of Carl Schurz* [New York, 1939], I, 121).

[28] *Illinois State Journal,* Aug. 9, 1860.

[29] Lincoln wrote a letter the next week in which he explained that it would be "imprudent and contrary to the reasonable expectation of my friends for me to write or speak anything upon doctrinal points now" (To T. A. Cheney, Aug. 14, 1860; John G. Nicolay and John Hay, eds., *The Complete Works of Abraham Lincoln* [New York, 1905], VI, 48).

[30] *Illinois State Journal,* Aug. 9, 1860.

WILSON. General Wilson, a former commissioner of the United States Land Office, although not actually a prominent political figure, had on this occasion a unique appeal for his listeners. He was an old-line Henry Clay Whig, which in itself gave him personal prestige, since Clay had enunciated what now seemed to many Republicans the sensible policies toward slavery. Wilson also had been a delegate to the Baltimore Convention of the Union party, which nominated Bell and Everett, and was a sincere admirer of Bell. Later, however, he had attended a Chicago meeting designed to give Douglas the Bell-Everett votes of Illinois and his reaction to "so unholy a coalition" was that he had become a Lincoln supporter.[32] The Republican planners hoped that Wilson could persuade Bell's friends to follow.

Wilson's purpose was to repudiate Douglas and eulogize Lincoln as a disciple of Clay. Realizing that his listeners were the common people from farms and hamlets, he attempted to win their good will by expressing confidence in the sound views of "the masses of the people." They believed in the permanancy of the Union, he said, and have supported the Constitution and the laws. It is to the common people we look for the "honesty, ability, and fidelity" required of public officials. The speaker won applause by adding: "We have a brilliant example in the life and character of Mr. Lincoln."

The body of his address had three divisions, joined by clear transitions. First, he maintained that the nation had been brought near ruin by recent Democratic administrations. He attempted to arouse the indignation of his listeners against Pierce and Buchanan for mishandling the public trust. Support for this charge appeared in the form of five indictments dealing with domestic problems not connected with slavery. These indictments were reenforced in most cases with facts drawn from the administration's record.

The speaker introduced the second division of his address by criticizing the Kansas-Nebraska measure. He condemned Douglas for reopening the slavery question, thereby endangering national unity. Douglas had charged that the Missouri Compromise was inconsistent with nonintervention in slavery; he had had many opportunities before 1854 to call attention to such inconsistencies but had not done so. To incite further anger against Douglas, Wilson asserted that the despots of Europe and the leaders of the Catholic Church would rejoice at the disunion and weakening of America. He summarized his speech to this point by saying that the Democratic party could no longer be trusted.

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[31] *Ill. State Jour.*, Aug. 9, Aug. 13, Aug. 15, 1860; *Speech of Hon. O. H. Browning Delivered at the Republican Mass-Meeting, Springfield, Ill. August 8th, 1860* (Quincy, Ill., 1860).

[32] *Illinois State Journal*, Aug. 15, 1860.

In the final section of his speech Wilson gave his personal reasons for supporting Lincoln rather than Bell. He used the method of residues to justify his decision: he recognized the futility of supporting Bell because the contest in Illinois was between Lincoln and Douglas; he refused to follow Breckinridge because this would lead to a continuation of the Buchanan policies; and he certainly could not sustain Douglas, principally because of his "last worst act of all, the reopening of the Slavery agitation by the repeal of the Missouri Compromise."

In his rather eloquent conclusion the speaker said that he unselfishly placed the preservation of the Union above the gains of a particular political party. Moreover, he expressed "an insuperable repugnance to arrangements for taking the election out of the hands of the people."

Wilson's use of emotional language contributed to his purpose of condemning Douglas and those who would subvert the union. He labeled the policies of Buchanan "nefarious," and added: "Thus are the holiest feelings and principles of the human heart probed and tortured by inquisitorial ingenuity, and thus used as a means of debasing and enslaving the people." In contrast, he spoke of the "integrity, the purity, the Constitution-sustaining, law-abiding, Union-loving principles of Mr. Lincoln."

BROWNING. Orville Hickman Browning, a Quincy lawyer, former state legislator, and one of the organizers of the Republican party, followed Wilson at the main stand. He spoke for "two hours to a large and attentive audience, apparently to their acceptance."[33]

Browning referred to the appearance before them of the next president and applauded the nation's recognition of at least *one* great man in Illinois. These remarks drew cheers. He then declared that the all-absorbing question facing political meetings all over the country was "negro slavery and its relation to the Federal government." His purpose he stated succinctly: he proposed to deal not with the "moral, social, or economical aspects of slavery," but with "some of its most obvious political features." As an old-line Clay Whig he asserted that the doctrines of the Republican party had been most eloquently advanced by Clay. This approach won a favorable reaction because most of his hearers admired the old Whig policies.

The speaker capitalized on this response and produced an even more enthusiastic reception by delivering a somewhat lengthy eulogy of Clay. Here his choice of language added to the effect. Those who oppose Republicanism, he said, are those who, while Clay lived, "pursued him with a bitterness of hatred, a persevering vindictiveness and malignity of spirit, that would do credit to a bloodhound on the track of his flying prey." These men, he declared, "vilified, traduced, slandered, maligned, and denounced" Clay as a "traitor, perjurer, and scoundrel." This "wisest of sages, the most incorruptible of patriots, the profoundest of statesmen" had been damned by them with false accusation and hypocritical pretense for their own "base and

[33] Pease and Randall, p. 422.

traitorous ends." Throughout the speech the speaker quoted at length from Clay, using an authority needing no corroboration for this audience.

In passing, Browning identified Republican principles also with the revered doctrines of the "patriot sires of the revolution." In this section he again showed his tendency to be "expansive and florid."[34]

He returned again and again to the same ideas, perhaps trying to guarantee that his most important suggestions would be remembered. Whenever his audience applauded a reference to Clay, he sang yet another brief song of praise for the Kentuckian.

His arguments on slavery were cogent and effectively worded. They represented perhaps the best statement of Republican principles made during the rally. First of all, he said, the party stood exactly where the Founding Fathers of the Constitution stood on slavery: they did not want it made a national institution; yet they wanted to leave it alone wherever it already existed. Browning showed clear insight into the national controversy, declaring that many mistakenly thought the Republicans advocated immediate emancipation and complete Negro equality.

Browning's second point was his most important, and he kept coming back to reenforce it: the Republican Party opposed the expansion of slavery into territories then free. He called once more upon Clay's authority to show that the Constitution did not give slavery any right to expand. The Northwest Ordinance, he reminded them, had stopped slavery at the Ohio River and he noted that, in long periods when everyone had accepted slavery where it was, but refrained from raising the question of its expansion, the nation had had peace.

At scattered points in the address, the speaker advanced two reasons for opposing the spread of slavery into free territories. The first was that there would be no more free states in which those unwilling to be brought into contact with slavery could settle. By causal reasoning, he established that under such a system there could be no new free states, since no state had been admitted free where slavery had been allowed a foothold. His second reason was that human slavery and freedom of speech could not coexist. He asserted there were many instances in the South of men being persecuted merely for expressing an opinion about slavery. "Book sellers have been mobbed and driven away," he declared, "for no other reason than that books discussing the question of slavery have been found upon their shelves."

The third major point in Browning's speech was that Congress had complete power over the territories in all matters, including Negro slavery. To establish this, he once more invoked the authority of Clay and the Founding Fathers of the Revolution. When a territory was ready for admission to the union, he felt the people could establish their own laws on slavery. He did not amplify this latter principle, perhaps because it sounded embarrassingly close to Douglas' hated philosophy of squatter sovereignty.

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[34] Maurice G. Baxter, "Orville H. Browning: Conservative in American Politics," unpub. diss. (Univ. of Illinois, 1948), pp. 111–112.

Browning's was clearly a fighting speech. It must have aroused those who heard it to even more excited opposition to the South's "peculiar institution" than had other speeches that day. The audience responded with prolonged cheering when he quoted Clay: "No earthly power will ever make me vote to spread slavery over territory where it does not exist." In his fiery peroration he used metaphorical language drawn from the military in describing the approaching election: "The opposing parties are marshaling their hosts for the combat. Already the advance columns have met in fierce and terrible conflict; already the battle has begun. . . ." In closing, he said all the "treasonable sentiments" uttered about disunion had come from non-Republicans, and he ended with fighting words from Clay: "I am for staying within the Union and fighting for my rights–if necessary with the sword. . . . Here I am within it, and here I mean to stand and die . . . defy[ing] all power upon earth to expel me. . . ." These were not words designed to incite conciliation and compromise with the determined opposition.

TRUMBULL. Lyman H. Trumbull of Belleville, United States senator from Illinois since 1855, and a Democrat turned Republican over the Kansas-Nebraska controversy, was the principal speaker on the evening program. The speaking was preceded by another parade which filled the streets with four thousand torches,[35] stretching in every direction "as far as the eye could see."[36] The wild enthusiasm for the parade and the accompanying fireworks display matched the exuberance characteristic of the rally. The Wigwam was "packed full" for the speeches.[37]

Browning had spoken in the afternoon somewhat formally and Wilson had read his speech from manuscript,[38] but Trumbull spoke extemporaneously and was often interrupted. There were cheers, laughter, and shouts of yes and no.[39] The senator had a reputation as a political debater; "he had a logical mind and the ability to think quickly."[40] He utilized this ability to win an enthusiastic hearing from the large audience.

By extemporizing, he was able to adapt his remarks to the shouts and interruptions of the Douglas supporters in the crowd. His ready and witty answers brought applause and increased confidence in the trustworthiness of the speaker and his ideas. When Trumbull said that Douglas had once denied the principle of popular sovereignty and now was advocating it, someone cried out: "He has been converted." Answered Trumbull: "You never knew him to be converted from the error of his ways except on one occasion–when he joined the Republicans and helped scotch and kill Lecompton." Another doubter, when Trumbull accused Douglas of voting in the

[35] New York *Herald*, Aug. 14, 1860.

[36] Vinson, p. 578.

[37] Pease and Randall, p. 422.

[38] Pease and Randall, p. 422.

[39] *Illinois State Journal*, Aug. 13, 1860.

[40] Horace White, *Life of Lyman Trumbull* (Boston, 1913), p. 419.

Senate against an amendment giving Kansas the right to exclude or recognize slavery, asked if Trumbull could give him the page where this record could be found. The senator not only was able to give him the page numbers but also said that if the questioner were unsatisfied he would take him to the state house, find the *Globe*, and let him see it with his own eyes. This retort brought "great and prolonged cheering."[41]

The speech was almost wholly an attack on Douglas. His purpose he stated explicitly as an attempt to call attention to the "misrepresentations, absurdities, and contradictions" of the Democratic party and Senator Douglas. Trumbull showed in the beginning of his address a keen appreciation of the composition of his audience. The principles of Republicanism, he said, were well understood by Republicans and he felt he need not spend time repeating them for an audience made up of vigorous supporters of the party.

Trumbull pointed to five Douglas inconsistencies, using the "Little Giant" as a witness against himself, much to the delight of the audience. (1) Douglas had said a political community has the right to govern itself, with Pennsylvania and Kansas territory occupying the same position in respect to the Constitution; later he denied having said the territories were sovereign. On popular sovereignty, he had once said sovereign states have the right to make their governments, but he had never claimed these powers for the territories; yet he was campaigning for president by saying the territories have a right to manage their own domestic affairs. (2) Douglas had in 1845 introduced an amendment prohibiting slavery in states north of parallel 36° 30′ made from the territory of Texas; now he was talking of nonintervention in the territories. (3) In 1848 he had said he would resign before voting for the Wilmot Proviso; two months later he offered an amendment excluding slavery from Oregon. (4) The Illinois state legislature in 1849 instructed Douglas to vote for a proposition excluding slavery from the territories. He came to Springfield and criticized the legislature for instructing him on something he had done of his own accord. Yet when he was accused later of voting to exclude slavery from the territories, he said he hoped his accusers would do him the justice of saying he had voted under instructions! (5) In 1849 Douglas had called the Missouri Compromise a sacred thing, "canonized in the hearts of the people"; in the Kansas-Nebraska Act the Compromise had been repudiated.

These "twistings" by Douglas were of serious proportions in the eyes of this audience, and Trumbull's arguments were particularly effective. The five inconsistencies supplied the structure for the speech and sandwiched among them were other attacks on popular sovereignty itself. Trumbull argued that a people's right to do exactly as they pleased led to anarchy and contradicted "regulated liberty." He supported this assertion with three examples: Utah had not the right to legalize polygamy; Kansas territory could not sanction an African slave trade; and no community had the right

[41] *Illinois State Journal*, Aug. 13, 1860.

to license theft and murder. He further denied the soundness of popular sovereignty as Douglas proposed it by saying that the first five thousand people in a territory had no right to legislate for those who would come after them from the United States, whose twenty million people all had rights regarding the territories. The speaker also refuted Douglas' statement that the Republicans opposed the admission of any new slave states. His evidence was drawn from the Republican platforms, which contained no such statement, and from the Freeport Lincoln-Douglas debate in which Lincoln had stated plainly that he was not pledged to oppose the admission of additional slave states.

This speech was clear, straightforward, and convincing. The language was for the most part simple, direct, and even homely. The doctrine of Douglas he said had been "denied, repudiated and spit upon by the very man who advanced it." He referred to the "Douglas party" as the "northern wing of the Buzzard Party" and to Douglas himself as "an imposter and a cheat." Near the end of the recital of inconsistencies, he said he thought the audience was "about sick of the windings and twistings of this man," sick enough to "spew him out of their mouths in November." This kind of talk was effective with his listeners because it was the language they used.

Trumbull concluded his speech with a brief reference to Lincoln's sterling qualities and contrasting consistency. Again he recognized that he need not convince an Illinois Republican audience of the virtues of their own candidate.

IV

These Republican spokesmen wanted above all to preserve the Union. Their purposes were to incite enthusiasm for the Republican cause, to win Illinois for Lincoln and the party slate, and to strike fear into the hearts of the Douglas Democrats by a demonstration of Republican strength. By arousing indigation against those who for political victory would destroy the Union, they hoped to woo the votes of the undecided, and perhaps of the Bell men. Although they welcomed converts, their main effort that day was directed toward stimulating their fellow party members. Primary among these purposes was their wish to generate a determination among pro-Lincoln forces to roll up an impressive vote for the party in Illinois.

How successful were they in achieving these ends? Of the efficacy of their immediate response there can be no doubt. The size of the crowds gathered to listen, the intensity of their interest in the speeches, and their wild jubilation are indications that they were impressed. The rally has been called "the largest and most enthusiastic assemblage congregated in central Illinois up to that time."[42]

The carnival atmosphere must not be overlooked, of course. Many of the celebrants attended for the excitement and spent their time marching through the streets. But thousands of others heard and were moved. The masses of the people in that day were interested in political issues and listened attentively.[43] Many of those who walked forty miles or drove by wagon one hundred miles must have wanted to hear as well as to celebrate. In addition to the immediate audience, some of the speeches reached thousands of other voters in printed form, since newspaper accounts and pamphlets of political speeches were closely scrutinized.

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[42] William E. Baringer, "The Presidential Candidate Attends a Rally," *Abraham Lincoln Quart.*, 4 (1946), 123.

The Democrats, naturally, claimed the same kind and degree of enthusiasm for their meetings, and the Springfield rally was only one of many such gatherings during the campaign. The meeting on August 8 probably created more than average interest, however, because it was held in the candidate's home town and its planners intended it to be the outstanding event of the canvass.

The newspapers, at least the Republican ones, felt that the rally had had a beneficial result. The Alton *Courier* predicted Lincoln would be elected; if there had been any doubt, it exclaimed, the "monster meeting at Springfield" spoke and "will continue to speak, till November, in language that admits of no double meaning." The Carlinville *Free Democrat* agreed, declaring that the *people* were there from every section of the state and were jubilant.[44] The *Central Illinois Gazette* thought "the hearts of the people were stirred" by a meeting that "will be long remembered." It said the rally was "a fair touch-stone of the popular feeling in Illinois, and its ringing cheers sounded like a knell" to the Democratic party.[45]

How much of this response was due actually to the speakers and what they said is, of course, impossible to determine. Nonetheless, a meeting of this magnitude must have had some long-range effect on the November election. The Republican vote in Sangamon County (Springfield) itself increased from 1174 in 1856 and 2729 in 1858 to 3556 votes in 1860,[46] although Douglas still carried the county by a few votes. Lincoln's state-wide majority over Douglas was 11,966 votes.[47] The Republicans were strongest in the north, as was expected, but they made strong gains in Egypt over previous elections. Douglas won a majority in some of the strongly contested counties in the center of the state, although the Republican increases over 1856 showed that the campaign in general, and perhaps the Springfield rally in particular, had had an effect.

What influence, if any, did this rally have on the larger problem of the coming disruption of the Union? In these speeches, and in others throughout the campaign, the Republican leaders of Illinois left little room for compromise with the views of the South. They were opposed to the extension of slavery, and Browning had mentioned fighting with the sword, if necessary. As Gustave Koerner expressed it in December, the alternative seemed to be "war or peaceable submission by the South."[48] It is entirely possible that the speeches in Springfield increased the fiery determination of those present to cling to their convictions and thereby widened the chasm dividing the nation.

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[43] Johnson, p. 117.

[44] In *Illinois State Journal,* Aug. 11, 1860.

[45] Aug. 15, 1860.

[46] *History of Sangamon County, Ill.* (Chicago, 1881), p. 275.

[47] This figure includes some votes not counted in the official election returns because of improper reporting. See James, pp. 468–469.

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[48] Letter to Lyman Trumbull, Dec. 10, 1860 (*Trumbull Papers*).

The Campaign for Memphis, 1860

WALDO W. BRADEN

14

In the presidential election of 1860, the Douglas Democrats, the Breckinridge supporters, and the Constitutional Unionists campaigned vigorously in Memphis, Tennessee. Local politicians received substantial help from nationally known speakers who found profit and pleasure in speaking at this crossroads of railroad and river. Before the end of the canvass William L. Yancey, Jefferson Davis, Louis T. Wigfall, L. Q. C. Lamar, William Sharkey, Andrew Johnson, Stephen A. Douglas, and many lesser lights had displayed their rhetorical wares before the Memphis voters. Few places in the nation were treated to more varied and colorful political oratory.

Why was this area important? Many cross currents of conflicting interests and diverse attitudes swirled through this region. Merchants, bankers, and cotton factors maintained firm ties with the North and West as well as with the down-river interests. They were alarmed by threats to the Union because they had a valuable trade and held dreams of a greater city. Plantation owners sympathized with slavocracy, viewed with passion Yankee interference with slavery, and imagined a great conspiracy to take away their property. They felt a kinship with planters of the Deep South. The foreign-born residents, mainly Irish and Germans,[1] some thirty percent of the population, were much opposed to the Constitutional Unionists who were tainted with Know-Nothingness; consequently, they became fair game for the warring Democrats.

The result was a delicate balance between Whigs and Democrats. Even in years when the Democrats were united they had difficulty defeating their old Whig foes, who were particularly strong in the plantation areas of the Tenth Congressional District.[2] In 1860 the split between the Douglasites and southern bolters cast doubt upon the outcome of the election. The loss of a single district in Tennessee was enough to give victory to the Constitutional Unionists.

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[1] Of the 6938 foreign-born persons in Memphis 4159 were Irish; 1412 German; and 522 English (*Eighth Census, Population*, pp. XXXII). Among southern cities Memphis ranked third to Louisville and New Orleans in its number of foreign-born.

[2] The Tenth Congressional District consisted of five counties: Fayette, Hardeman, Haywood, Madison, Shelby.

Organization for the Campaign, July

In spite of hot summer weather, the news of the national political conventions stirred Memphis party men to action. The rejuvenated Whigs, or Constitutional Unionists, soon perfected a local organization and held a rally to ratify the nomination of Bell and Everett. Tennessee Whigs, foremost nationally in organizing the new party and in nominating the Tennessee senator,[3] had little difficulty developing local groups, including those of southwest Tennessee.[4] In Memphis they promoted the Central Union Club, the Young Men's Bell and Everett Club, and groups in the First, Second, Sixth, Seventh, and Eighth Wards. Throughout the period they relied mostly upon local speakers, usually four or five at a meeting. In addition, they vented enthusiasm through singing, torchlight processions, basket dinners, pole-raisings, and incessant bell-ringing in honor of John Bell.

The Democrats had difficulty deciding which faction of the Democracy should control the state. When Yancey and other "seceders" walked out of the Charleston Convention in late April, the Tennessee delegates, although sympathetic, refused to bolt. At the Baltimore Convention nineteen of the twenty-four Tennessee delegates withdrew when the contested Douglas delegates of Louisiana and Alabama were seated. These bolters helped nominate Breckinridge and Lane. This wing without difficulty gained the support of most of the Democratic newspapers of Tennessee and of most of the district organizations. But in the Tenth Congressional District, and in northern Mississippi and eastern Arkansas, the admirers of Douglas resisted stubbornly. The Memphis *Appeal*, largest paper in West Tennessee, came out for the "Little Giant."[5] Ratification meetings for him were numerous.[6] In Memphis, on July 5, two days after one faction approved the nomination of Breckinridge and Lane, a second group countered with a ratification meeting for the "Little Giant."[7] The *Appeal* estimated the attendance at 3500, while the *Avalanche* put the number between 1200 and 1500.[8] Samuel P. Walker reported to Douglas that this rally was "the largest and most enthusiastic" he had "ever seen" in Memphis.[9] At the district convention which assembled at the Exchange Building, July 11, 1860, the Breckinridge Democrats apparently lacked sufficient strength to risk a showdown;[10] consequently, without a fight they withdrew to the Odd Fellows Hall. An apologist explained that the bolters, not wishing to create "ill feeling," voluntarily chose to move. If this explanation was true, it was the only time during the four months that either faction attempted to avoid "ill feeling."[11]

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[3] Joseph Howard Parks, *John Bell of Tennessee* (Baton Rouge, 1950), pp. 339–360.

[4] The delegates of the Tenth Congressional District met July 10 in Memphis, passed resolutions of endorsement, nominated B. D. Nabors, Memphis attorney, as district elector, and concluded with an evening mass meeting at the Odd Fellows Hall (Memphis *Morning Enquirer*, July 11, 1860). Many other groups nearby had already held similar ratification meetings. Meetings had been held in Knoxville, Tenn., June 23 (Brownlow's Knoxville *Whig*, June 30) and at Oxford, Miss., June 27 (*Enquirer*, July 17). One was reported at Monroe, La., June 23, and there was a state meeting at Baton Rouge, July 4 (Ouachita [La.] *Register*, in *Enquirer*, July 6).

[5] The *Appeal* published daily, tri-weekly, and weekly. During the campaign the *Weekly Appeal*, with a circulation of 5144, was devoted entirely to politics. Other Douglas papers in the Tenth District were Somerville *Democrat*, Bolivar *Democrat*, and the Grand Junction *Quid Nunc*. (*Weekly Appeal*, July 18, 1860).

[6] July 14, Brownsville, Haywood Co., Tenn.; July 14, Jacinto, Tishomingo Co., Miss.; July 14, Bradley Co., Ark.; July 16, Pontotoc Co., Miss.; July 21, Madison Co., Tenn.; July 21, Tipton Co., Tenn.; July 21, Shelbyville, Bedford Co., Tenn.; July 21, Oxford, Lafayette Co., Miss.; July 23, Looxahoma, De Soto Co., Miss.; July 24, Pine Bluff, Ark.; July 28, Nolahoe Camp, De Soto Co., Miss.; Aug. 2, Grand Junction, Hardeman Co., Tenn.; Aug. 6, Fayette Co., Tenn.; Aug. 6, Bolivar, Hardeman Co., Tenn.; Aug. 6,

Each wing set up a local organization. Less active than either of their rivals, Breckinridge Democrats worked through two clubs, the Shelby County Democrats Association and the Young Men's Democratic Association. The Douglas Democrats, rivaling the Bellites in enthusiasm, promoted seven groups: the Democratic Association of Shelby County, the German Douglas Club,[12] the Young Men's Little Giant Club, the Mechanics Club, the Bluff City Club, the Chelsea Club, and the South Memphis Club. These groups kept their partisans busy with nightly rallies, serenades, torchlight parades, and barbecues.

YANCEY SPEAKS IN MEMPHIS, AUGUST 14

By late July the Breckinridge forces abandoned hope of gaining undisputed control of the party organization. The Douglasites, under competent leadership and cheered on by the *Appeal*, continued to be aggressive and persistent. The anti-Douglas forces feared that this disaffection in a district which had previously contributed majorities to the Democrats, would tip the delicate balance in favor of Bell and thereby cost them the state. One of the most damaging arguments used in the region against Breckinridge was that he conspired to destroy the Union. His enemies cited the support of

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Decaturville, Decatur Co., Tenn. (from ratification reports and resolutions reported in the *Daily Appeal*).

[7] Memphis *Daily Avalanche*, July 4, 1860.

[8] The speakers were William T. Brown, William H. Carroll, J. P. Pryor, E. M. Yerger, Addison H. Douglas, and John Eubank (Memphis *Daily Appeal*, July 8; *Avalanche*, July 9, 1860).

[9] Walker to Stephen A. Douglas, July 9, 1860 (Douglas Papers, Univ. of Chicago). This conclusion was confirmed by a letter from W. L. Green to Douglas, July 17, 1860 (*ibid*).

[10] Memphis *Weekly Appeal*, July 18, 1860.

[11] Article signed "Justice," Memphis *Avalanche*, July 18, 1860.

[12] One of the most interesting of the Douglas groups was the German Douglas Club, organized July 16 with an estimated 300 present (Memphis *Daily Appeal*, July 17, 1860). A pro-Douglas German language newspaper may have been published in Memphis. (George Fort Milton, *The Eve of Conflict* (Boston, 1934), p. 498.)

William Lowndes Yancey of Alabama as prima facie evidence of this malicious intent. William T. Brown, district elector for Douglas, pictured the Alabama fire-eater as an arch-conspirator who for years had been "secretly waiting, watching, and plotting"[13] the disruption of the Union. A. J. Keller, of Raleigh, told a meeting, "We must set ourselves firmly against the most *unscrupulous men* who ever threatened the welfare of the country." He warned against following the leadership of Yancey, Wright of South Carolina, and Jefferson Davis.[14] A Douglas ratification meeting in Pontotoc County, Mississippi, resolved: "That young Breckinridge of Kentucky in accepting the nomination of the bolters convention and uniting . . . with *the desperate fortunes of Yancey and his followers*, committed an act of folly which blights all his present fair prospects. . . ."[15]

In an effort to stamp out this insurgency, the Memphis supporters of Breckinridge called upon Yancey to help silence the obstreperous Douglasites and the vociferous *Appeal*. The Alabaman enthusiastically agreed to come, because he too smarted from the stings of these attacks, which he said were "not urged through ignorance or misapprehension, but as a part of a grand conspiracy entered into to destroy my character—in order to destroy to that extent the cause I advocate."[16]

To counter this strategy, Yancey recognized that he must answer the charges against his character and persuade the voters that he was not conspiring to destroy the Union. Furthermore, he realized that he must convince his Memphis listeners, who were firmly tied to the North and West, that the election of Breckinridge offered no threat to the federal Union.

A misunderstanding concerning the time of Yancey's arrival prevented the Breckinridge faction from staging an extravagant welcome. In spite of "the shortness of the notice" a respectably large number of his friends met him at the Memphis and Charleston station. When the famous Alabaman stepped from the train he was greeted by "a salute of thirty guns," ushered into "an open barouche drawn by four beautiful horses," and escorted to the Gayoso House to the accompaniment of band music. That evening, preparatory to his appearance of the next day, the Breckinridge Association held a rally, addressed by Captain James Hamilton and N. D. Collins. After the speaking the members marched to the hotel, serenaded their famous guest, and cheered for a speech; but Yancey did not appear because, as the *Avalanche* explained, he was "too unwell."[17]

Bellites and Douglas men as well as Breckinridge supporters, poured into Memphis from all directions by foot, horseback, wagon, carriage, and railroad. A few came to clarify their thinking about confusing issues; some attended out of loyalty. Many, however, were pulled there by curiosity; they wanted to see and to hear the famous fire-eater.

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[13] In a speech at a Douglas ratification meeting, Brownsville, Tenn., July 14 (Memphis *Daily Appeal*, July 18, 1860).

[14] Memphis *Daily Appeal*, July 21, 1860; italics added.

[15] Memphis *Daily Appeal*, July 27, 1860; italics added.

[16] William L. Yancey to Beverly Matthews of Courtland, Ala., August 6, 1860 (Yancey Papers, Alabama State Dept. of Archives and History).

[17] Aug. 14, 1860.

The "great event" was staged in the open space at the corner of Jefferson and Third Streets. By seven-thirty P.M. the cannon, near the speaker's stand, started booming, bonfires were lighted, and "the heavens were illuminated by the beautiful fireworks which were sent shooting up from the lot." By eight-thirty spectators filled "every vacant spot behind, in front and around the stand."[18] The *Appeal* reported that the crowd was one of the largest "ever gathered together in the city."[19]

The festivities opened with the Breckinridge and Lane Clubs, led by "bands of music," parading through the streets, displaying numerous transparencies "beautifully painted" with appropriate mottoes. One eager young man carried a sign which read, "We want our rights—we will have them. Peaceably if we can—forcibly if we must." Little did this future rebel realize how well he read the tragedy ahead.

When Yancey mounted the platform at eight-thirty his supporters gave him a great cheer; the cannon boomed again, and a last shower of rockets sprayed the sky. Flaming tar barrels and torches illuminated the area. An "experienced shorthand writer from Cincinnati," employed especially "to take copy of speech," made last-minute preparations, and Yancey carefully arranged "his scrapbook and documents" on the speaking stand. The great moment was at hand.[20]

In opening, Yancey recognized that his greatest problem was one of personal vindication. He promised to speak "as one honest man ought to speak to another—frankly, truthfully, fearlessly," and to talk "in behalf of the Democracy, of the Constitution, and of Union under the Constitution."[21] He hoped to disarm his listeners immediately.

The famous fire-eater reasoned that a good offense was a good defense; consequently, he devoted approximately sixty percent of his remarks to denouncing Stephen A. Douglas. Shifting attention away from himself, he accused Douglas of "designs to dismember" the Democracy, of plotting to defeat the two-thirds rule in the national Democratic Convention at Charleston, and of forcing the delegates to accept his views of the Kansas-Nebraska Bill. "Mr. Douglas' friends forced us out of the Convention . . ." and obtained their majority "by trickery," he said. This appeal was a strong emotional one. He defended his own part in the bolt: "Why did Yancey lead them? Did he pull the wool over their eyes? Had he seduced them? The [Cotton] States left the national Democratic body . . . because its organization had fallen into the hands of men who thought more of the fortunes of Mr. Douglas than they did of the Constitution of their country or the Democracy." Yancey criticized the Baltimore Convention for the seating of "bogus Democrats from Louisiana and Alabama"; he cast doubt on the legality of Douglas' nomination on the basis that he failed to receive a vote equal to two-thirds of the number of the electoral college; consequently, Yancey concluded that the Illinois senator stood "on the same footing as Breckinridge." Recognizing the weakness of this argument, the speaker hastened to show that Breckinridge deserved the Democratic votes because he was supported by the "truly Democratic States." He resorted to the "bandwagon" technique by suggesting that Breckinridge was endorsed by many prominent Democrats, including "every past living Democratic candidate for the presidency," the entire Buchanan Cabinet, eight of the ten Democratic senators from the North, four-fifths of the Democratic representatives, every Democratic representative from Tennessee, and all the southern Democratic representatives and senators. Yancey then asked, "Will you put those broken-down politicians, Soule, Forsyth, Clemens, and your Footes against this mighty array of genius"?[22]

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[18] Memphis *Avalanche,* Aug. 15, 1860.

[19] Aug. 15, 1860.

[20] Memphis *Avalanche,* Aug. 15, 1860.

[21] The available text is probably not a verbatim report. But the *Avalanche* employed a shorthand reporter to take it down. Undoubtedly Yancey, or more likely M. W. Cluskey, editor of the *Avalanche,* made the text more readable. On the whole, however, the printed speech appears to be in oral style. The text is printed in full in the Memphis *Avalanche,* Aug. 17, 1860.

Yancey accused Douglas of "warring" on Democracy in the past, and cited as evidence his vote against the Lecompton proslavery constitution of Kansas, and his advocacy of popular sovereignty. "Vengeance and Vengeance alone ought to be written as the motto on every Douglas banner that floats to the breeze," Yancey shouted.

Before leaving the Illinois senator, Yancey attempted to stir the emotions of his Irish and German listeners by denouncing the recent efforts at fusion between Bellites and Douglasites in Kentucky. He shamed the Douglasites for plotting to join the American party, which four years before had campaigned on an anti-Catholic, antiforeign plank: "Think of it, you Irish adopted citizens! Mark it well you Germans! Remember it you men who have thought that the American party were not for equal rights. Think of your being transferred like sheep and a 'bell' put on you. [Laughter and applause]."

After more than two hours Yancey turned to an attack on John Bell and the Constitutional Unionists. Again he resorted to ridicule and stirred up strong emotions: "What is his record worth, honest men of Tennessee? The nominating Conventions won't declare his opinions, and he himself . . . won't declare his opinion—but he merely says 'I am for the Union, the Constitution, and the enforcement of the laws! . . .' And here, on this crisis in our country's destiny . . . John Bell and Edward Everett come before you with a padlock on their mouths and on their banners."

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[22] Three of these were Douglas leaders: Pierre Soule in Louisiana, John Forsyth in Alabama, Henry S. Foote in Tennessee. Jere Clemens lived in Memphis and northern Alabama and supported Bell.

Yancey carefully avoided direct accusations of Bell, but read to his tired audience several quotations from the *Congressional Globe* and various newspapers to support the frequently circulated charges that the Tennessean had favored abolition of slavery in the District of Columbia, and had refused to support the Lecompton Constitution. Yancey demonstrated that he considered Bell far less important than Douglas by devoting no more than ten percent of his remarks to the Tennessean.

About midnight, following three hours of speaking, Yancey turned to direct defense of himself. A remark from the crowd suggests that some of his listeners had already departed: "You've got them down now. They are all leaving you." Yancey replied, "Oh, stay a little while longer. You abuse me three hundred and sixty-four days in the year! Give me one hour's chance–just one hour."

He dismissed as unfair and unimportant the accusations of disunionism leveled at him. He presented himself as an upright, patriotic Southerner, whose only purpose was to defend southern rights:

> Oh! Gentlemen, how hard that he who is willing to forego office for years as I have done—asking nothing of the people, refusing the whole time since I was a young man to be connected in any way with candidacy for office, but the whole time giving my mind, intellect, heart, character, and money to try to raise the Southern mind to a perception of its rights, in order that we may be men in the hour that tries men's souls—how hard that such a man should be denounced as a demagogue, an office-seeker, and a traitor.

The *Avalanche* believed that Yancey had delivered a great oration. The editor of the Paris (Tennessee) *Patriot* reported, "We listened to his powerful oratory for four hours and like the thousands of others, of all parties, we sat entranced during the whole time."[23] The *Morning Enquirer*, the Bell paper, said, "In some, perhaps in most respects, he met the expectations of those who attended, for he unquestionably has many of the qualities of an orator. . . . He was respectfully and attentively listened to, the large crowd doing credit to the character of Memphis for patience and orderly deportment."[24] The *Daily Appeal* thought Yancey spoke "with caution." "There was some humor, a tolerable amount of sarcasm, and flashes of a driving impelling species of eloquence but as a whole there was heaviness in the argument. . . ."[25]

The newspapers reflected many of the attitudes of his auditors. Seemingly there was general agreement that Yancey was an eloquent speaker. The Breckinridge Democrats doubtlessly were entranced by the presentation of what they wanted to hear. The Bell and Douglas men, who went with closed minds, heard what they "expected" to hear; they were unmoved and perhaps more set in their opposition. On the other hand the "orderly deportment" complimented Yancey. Three days earlier the Bell and Douglas supporters had completely broken up a meeting which Landon C. Haynes, state elector for Breckinridge, had attempted to address.[26] Perhaps Edmund Ruffin's evaluation of another Yancey speech is applicable to this one: Yancey was so fluent that he "did not know when to stop."[27]

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[23] In Memphis *Daily Appeal*, Aug. 24, 1860.

[24] Aug. 15, 1860.

[25] Aug. 15, 1860.

Yancey minimized a direct discussion of the important issues and put his arguments in strong emotional terms. He sought to persuade Tennesseans to vote for Breckinridge because Bell and Douglas did not deserve their votes. Recognizing the pro-Union attitudes he wisely avoided discussing southern rights and secession and concentrated upon a defense of his character, presenting himself as a staunch supporter of the Constitution and the Union. Well aware of the seriousness of the Douglas threat and the difficulty of converting old-time Whigs, hardened by years of party discipline, he was equally wise to concentrate on Douglas instead of Bell.

Du Bose is probably correct in his belief that Yancey was eager to interpret "the national character of the Breckinridge campaign";[28] in addition to his immediate audience the Alabaman probably hoped to reach a greater audience of Democrats in the neighboring and the border and northern states. He wanted advance copy for his projected northern tour.[29]

From a long-range point of view there is little to commend in Yancey's four-hour speech, which was little more than a vicious attack on Douglas and Bell, based largely upon emotional appeal. Personal vindication was sound political strategy, but at a time when the country was on the threshold of civil war these objectives seem somewhat trivial. Whether Yancey did speak "frankly, truthfully, fearlessly" is doubtful.

In the next month other important Breckinridge speakers destined to play leading roles in the Confederacy spoke in Memphis. L. Q. C. Lamar, representative from Mississippi, traveled across the state line to address an outdoor meeting on September 4. The newspapers failed to report his remarks, but they agreed upon his eloquence.[30] While campaigning in northern Mississippi,[31] Jefferson Davis stopped on September 22, to deliver a two-and-a-half-hour address,[32] in which he predicted that defeat of Breckinridge would mean dissolution of the Union. W. P. Miles, of Louisiana, and James R. Chalmers, of Mississippi, also appeared that night.[33] Less than a week later, fresh from rallies at Shreveport, Louisiana, and Vicksburg, Mississippi, Louis T. Wigfall, fiery secessionist senator from Texas, spoke from the same platform.[34] In spite of the prominence of these men, none received the attention given to Yancey. The speech of the Alabaman was reported in full and circulated in pamphlet form, but none of the others received so much as a column, even in the pro-Breckinridge *Avalanche*. Yancey's speech was considered a memorable event, but these later appearances were regarded as no more than interesting episodes.

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[26] Memphis *Avalanche*, Aug. 13, 1860.

[27] Avery Craven, *Edward Ruffin, Southerner* (New York, 1930), p. 161.

[28] John Witherspoon Du Bose, *The Life and Times of William Lowndes Yancey* (Birmingham, 1892), pp. 490–491.

[29] The care taken to record the speech in shorthand suggests this intention. In this regard M. W. Cluskey, who earlier had helped write the Breckinridge campaign literature (see Nichols, pp. 276, 338), and who was an editor of the *Avalanche*, was probably a great aid in planning this strategy and in circulating the speech in pamphlet form.

[30] Memphis *Daily Appeal*, Sept. 5; Memphis *Avalanche*, Sept. 5, 6, 1860.

[31] Percy Lee Rainwater, *Mississippi Storm Center of Secession, 1856–1861* (Baton Rouge, 1938), p. 152.

DEBATES OF THE ELECTORS, AUGUST AND SEPTEMBER

Today presidential electors play almost no part in a canvass; consequently, the voters rarely know their names. But during the fall of 1860 the electors were extremely important; they traveled from place to place, day after day, to debate usually for six or more hours. Each presented an opening speech from one to two hours long and, after his opponents' speeches, a thirty-minute rejoinder.

The electors of the Tenth Congressional District opened the Memphis series August 20,[35] and the subelectors of Shelby County "divided time" on September 7. On September 11 three of the state electors–Landon C. Haynes[36] for Breckinridge, William H. Polk, brother of the ex-President, for Douglas, and Balie Peyton,[37] for Bell[38]–conducted a third debate.

An incident during the third debate reflected the temper of the times. While speaking, Polk was handed a written question asking whether the election of Lincoln would justify the breakup of the Union. Apparently avoiding an answer, Polk said to Haynes, "Stand up and tell these people your opinion of this question." When Haynes made no reply, the Union supporters shouted enthusiastically. During his rejoinder, Haynes dismissed the question as one written by an "old Federalist." Not liking the implication, W. D. Ferguson, the author, immediately denied the accusation. He asserted that he had fought in two wars, one under Jackson, and that he was prepared to fight again, if necessary, to prevent dissolution of the Union. Applause filled the hall. When the tumult subsided, Haynes countered that upon the first "overt act of aggression upon the rights of the South" he intended to ask Ferguson to accompany him to Washington to hang Lincoln. If he refused, Haynes threatened to "hang" Ferguson "and all like him with grape vines." The *Enquirer* reported that the interchange "created immense excitement."[39] It indicated the growing frenzy gripping the South. Daily the press reported "multitudinous evidences of northern tampering with slaves,"[40] diabolical plots to burn towns, and the presence of mysterious strangers. Local groups organized to defend their homes in case Lincoln was elected.[41]

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[32] The Memphis *Enquirer* estimated the attendance at 600, while the *Avalanche* put the number at 2000.

[33] Only brief summaries of these speeches are reported (Memphis *Avalanche*, Sept. 24; *Enquirer*, Sept. 23; *Argus*, Sept. 24, 1860).

[34] Memphis *Daily Appeal*, Sept. 19; *Avalanche*, Sept. 22, 25, 27, 28, 1860.

[35] The speakers were B. D. Nabors for Bell, Hiram Bradford for Breckinridge, and William T. Brown for Douglas (Memphis *Avalanche*, Aug. 18, 21, 1860).

[36] Confederate senator from Tennessee from 1861–1865.

[37] Balie Peyton (1803–1878) represented Tennessee in the United States House of Representatives, 1833–1837. Later he practiced law in New Orleans, and for a time served as U.S. district attorney. From 1849–1853 he was U.S. minister to Chile. Upon his return he settled in San Francisco, where he practiced law and served as U.S. district attorney. In 1859 he returned to Tennessee, "with the patriotic hope that he might stay the tide of secession, save his state to the Union, and the Union from the desolations of civil war." (*The National Cyclopaedia of American Biography* [New York, 1897], VII, 176.)

[38] Memphis *Avalanche*, *Morning Enquirer*, *Daily Appeal*, Sept. 12, 1860.

On October 6, the second set of state electors[42] participated in the fourth debate, a five-hour verbal tussle which attracted a "rather slim" crowd.[43] The newspapers attributed the poor attendance to the weather, but other signs indicated that the Memphis listeners wearied of the long campaign.

"A GREAT NATIONAL MASS MEETING," OCTOBER 8 TO OCTOBER 11

During the first three months of the campaign the Constitutional Unionists carried on their part of the debate through local groups and speakers. They seemed to feel outside help unnecessary. The split in the Democratic party gave them the comfortable feeling that they could win Tennessee.

But in September and October the Bell and Everett men throughout the state were stirred to conduct a dramatic series of "protracted meetings." At Nashville, September 25, the citizens turned out in large numbers to hear John J. Crittenden and Horace Maynard.[44] Crittenden was so delighted with the enthusiasm that he described the welcome extended him as befitting "twenty Presidents."[45] At Knoxville, the bailiwick of Parson Brownlow, they held a two-day rally, September 27 and 28. Thousands came from all directions to participate in the festivities. Rival groups attempted to outdo each other in the parades; one delegation carried a persimmon tree covered with fruit and holding in its branches a live raccoon. The principal speakers were Benjamin H. Hill of Georgia, Leslie Coombs of Kentucky, and Horace

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[39] Sept. 12, 1860.

[40] Montgomery (Ala.) *Daily Mail*, Aug. 16, 1860.

[41] See Allan Nevins, *The Emergence of Lincoln* (New York, 1950), II, 306–309.

[42] William H. Carroll, in place of H. M. Watterson, spoke for Douglas, Nathaniel G. Taylor for Bell, and Harvey C. Whitthorne for Breckinridge.

[43] Memphis *Morning Enquirer*, Oct. 6; *Daily Appeal*, Oct. 4, 5, 6; *Avalanche*, Oct. 6, 1860.

[44] Nashville *Banner*, Sept. 25, in Knoxville *Whig*, Sept. 29, 1860.

[45] Parks, pp. 381–382.

Maynard.[46] Brownlow reported, "It has been a successful, a glorious, and a terrible meeting. We use these words with emphasis."[47]

On October 8, the Memphis celebration, scheduled for a full week, opened while the Shelby County Agricultural Fair was in progress. The "thousands" reported present in holiday spirit were treated to a great parade of two thousand persons, led by a wagon hauling a great bell, the symbol of the party. Close behind were carriages bearing William L. Sharkey, Thomas A. R. Nelson, and the other guests. A gaily decorated wagon, trimmed with red, white, and blue cloth, displayed twenty-seven young ladies, each representing a state and holding a sign bearing its name and emblem. Continuing the line of march were mounted citizens, two bands, and delegations from some if not all of the states of Alabama, Louisiana, Mississippi, Kentucky, Illinois, Arkansas, and Missouri. The seven local Bell and Everett Clubs brought up the rear.[48]

In the afternoon Judge Sharkey of Mississippi spoke for three hours to an estimated 1200–1500 at Brinkley's Grove in northwest Memphis. He argued that the administration and the Democratic party were responsible for difficulties of the time as well as for the agitation over slavery. Repeating a favorite Whig argument, he accused the Breckinridge wing of nominating its candidate for the purpose of assuring the election of Lincoln and thereby providing a spark to disrupt the Union. Since Lincoln and Breckinridge were sectional candidates and Douglas could not win, he contended, John Bell was the only man to "restore peace to the country." Sharkey concentrated his fire on Breckinridge and said little about Douglas.[49] What he said was neither original nor novel.

That night a second great rally was held at Court Square, "radiant with torches, lamps, and transparencies."[50] After a torchlight procession, the crowd listened to Thomas A. R. Nelson and Andrew Jackson Donelson[51] until well after midnight.[52] The October 9 *Argus* reported this meeting to be "probably the largest political demonstration ever witnessed in Memphis." The following night Nathaniel G. Taylor, elector-at-large for Tennessee, addressed another rally, attended by 4,000 to 5,000 persons.[53] Nelson talked to a third evening rally on October 10, 1860. He and several others were drafted at the last moment when those scheduled could not appear. Expressing a sentiment commonly held, he declared that he did not consider the election of a Black Republican sufficient cause to disrupt the Union and that he intended to resist aggression within the Union in the event of Lincoln's election.[54]

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[46] Other speakers included John F. House, Joseph T. Campbell, A. S. Colyer, Moses White, W. Y. C. Humes, and Z. B. Vance.

[47] Knoxville *Whig*, Sept. 29, 1860.

[48] Memphis *Morning Enquirer*, Oct. 5, 9; *Daily Appeal*, Oct. 9, 1860.

[49] Memphis *Enquirer*, Oct. 9, 1860.

[50] Memphis *Argus*, Oct. 9, 1860.

[51] Nephew of the wife of Andrew Jackson and vice-presidential candidate in 1856 on the Know-Nothing ticket.

[52] Other speakers were Robert F. Looney, Col. Crockett (nephew of David), and Col. Latham (Memphis *Argus*, Oct. 9; *Daily Appeal*, Oct. 9, 1860).

[53] Memphis *Daily Appeal*, *Morning Enquirer*, Oct. 10, 1860.

On Thursday evening Colonel Wood, state elector from Alabama, and John F. Sales of Memphis were pressed into service when the scheduled speakers again failed to appear. Even the *Enquirer* admitted a lack of enthusiasm, but attributed it to the "cold and cheerlessness of the night."[55] Probably the four nights of political polemics, combined with the county fair, brought near-exhaustion to the Bell speakers and their supporters. The failure to hold previously announced meetings on Friday and Saturday, and the silence of the Whig *Enquirer* concerning the success of the Bellites, indicated that the "great national mass meeting" had, in the words of the *Avalanche*, "fizzled out."

ANDREW JOHNSON SPEAKS AT MEMPHIS, OCTOBER 16

The rising tide of pro-Douglas sentiment in western Tennessee became a serious obstacle to the Breckinridge forces. They realized that a divided party had little chance of defeating an organization of old-time Whigs who habitually opposed Democrats, regardless of issues or personalities. On October 12, the Memphis *Avalanche* summarized their predicament: "Douglas, it is thought will not poll one thousand votes in Middle and East Tennessee. We assume that unless he polls six thousand votes in West Tennessee all is safe. . . ." But all was not safe in the Tenth Congressional District.

The Breckinridge Democrats needed a powerful voice to win votes away from Douglas. The *Avalanche* therefore announced with some satisfaction that "the old wheel horse, Andrew Johnson," had "taken the stump." In western Tennessee the senator had many friends, even among the Douglas faction, and was indeed welcome.[56]

Disgruntled by the insurgency at Charleston and Baltimore, and suspicious of Yancey and the southern Ultras, Johnson reluctantly took the stump, and only when he became fearful that John Bell, his bitter rival, might carry the state.[57]

In the company of A. O. P. Nicholson, the other Tennessee senator, Johnson spoke on October 16 to what one paper termed a "very respectable audience." The *Avalanche*, after showing great enthusiasm over his coming, was strangely reticent in commenting on what he actually said.[58] And there was a reason. The *Appeal* gave an explanation for the terse report in the *Avalanche.* Johnson had publicly denounced the bolts at Charleston and Baltimore, had not condemned Douglas to the nether region, and had emphasized that he—refusing to follow the lead of Yancey—intended to fight for southern rights within the Union. Straddling the fence, he urged Tennesseans to vote for Breckinridge, but he suggested that in the northern states Democrats should vote for Douglas in order to defeat Lincoln.[59] Consistent with his later actions, he dared to defy the extremists and refused to let the growing hysteria affect his thinking. The editor for the *Enquirer,* the Whig paper, wrote that in twenty-five years he had "never listened to an address so boiling over with rancorous venom,"[60] meaning, of course, that Johnson had viciously attacked John Bell. But this experience in western Tennessee convinced Johnson that a defeat was certain; consequently, he cut short his proposed tour and returned home discouraged, resigned to a Bell triumph.[61]

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[54] Memphis *Morning Enquirer*, Oct. 11, 1860.

[55] Oct. 12, 1860.

[56] On his announced itinerary four of his six speeches were scheduled in this area (Oct. 9, 1860).

[57] Robert W. Winston, *Andrew Johnson, Plebeian and Patriot* (New York, 1928), pp. 145–149. Johnson made a few speeches in the campaign. He spoke at Winchester, Tenn., Sept. 29, and later at Nashville. (Memphis *Daily Appeal*, Oct. 4.) He talked at Spring Hill, Oct. 13, at Memphis, Oct. 16, and Brownsville, Oct. 17. (*Avalanche*, Oct. 20, 1860.)

[58] Oct. 17, 1860.

Douglas Speaks at Memphis, October 24

When he learned that the Pennsylvania Republicans had elected a governor, Douglas is reported to have said to his secretary, "Mr. Lincoln is the next President. We must try to save the Union. I will go South."[62] For the second time in the campaign, the Illinois senator turned southward. On October 23, at Jackson, Tennessee, he addressed a gathering estimated at 10,000 for two hours and a quarter. En route to Memphis, he greeted crowds at Humboldt, Brownsville, Mason's Depot, and Grand Junction, giving short speeches at two of these places.[63]

At eleven o'clock that night a huge delegation, including a local committee of fifty, forty marshals on horseback, seven Douglas clubs, and three bands greeted him on his arrival in Memphis. His escort lifted him from the car and carried him to a waiting carriage. A second committee hurried Mrs. Douglas off by a private carriage away "from the arena of the hubbub and excitement." The newspapers reported that the bands played martial music, and skyrockets and Roman candles brightened the heavens. Soon the procession moved to the Gayoso House, where eager partisans blocked the main door, making it necessary for Douglas to slip in through the ladies' entrance. A few minutes later Douglas appeared on the balcony, thanked his listeners for the "cordial reception," and begged to be excused because, as he explained, he had made three speeches in the previous twenty-four hours without "going to bed."[64]

On October 24 Memphis was filled with excited persons, many of whom had come from as far away as Kentucky and Alabama. The Memphis and Charleston and the Mississippi and Tennessee railroads brought passengers to the city for half fare. A special train from Hernando, Mississippi, arrived in time for the speech.[65]

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[59] Oct. 17, 1860.
[60] Oct. 18, 1860.
[61] Winston, pp. 145–149.
[62] Milton, p. 496.
[63] Memphis *Daily Appeal,* Oct. 23, 24, 25, 1860.
[64] Memphis *Daily Appeal,* Oct. 24, 1860.

At twelve-forty-five P.M. two bands, forty marshals and hundreds of persons on horseback escorted their hero to Market Square. The *Appeal* eloquently reported, "Fair ladies and brave men stood along the sidewalk, sending up incessant cheers, waving their handkerchiefs and bidding the honored guest . . . a happy 'God speed'. . . ." Crowded into Market Square, leaving little room for those on foot, were carriages filled with ladies. Only after a half-hour was sufficient area cleared to provide room for pedestrians. Eager listeners stood on the nearby roofs, and leaned out windows.[66] Even the *Avalanche* estimated the crowd at five thousand.[67]

In spite of a strenuous speaking schedule, Douglas was in good form; according to the *Appeal*, he could be heard at fifty yards, though his voice seemed harsher than usual.[68]

Douglas came to quiet fears and stir loyalties; he came to reassure his listeners that they could live within the Union without fear of losing their property and that even the election of Lincoln was no cause for great alarm. He wanted to revitalize their patriotic sentiment and remind them of the common bonds existing between North and South.

In opening he emphasized, "I do not come to solicit your suffrage, but to make an appeal in behalf of this glorious Union by an exposition of those principles which in my opinion can only preserve the peace of this country." He devoted almost three-fourths of his speech to the "exposition" of the principles of popular sovereignty. "Can any man be a rational friend of his country who will not banish the whole subject from Congress, and let the people decide it, subject to the limitations of the Constitution?" asked Douglas.

In his own defense he became more direct and emphasized that he was advocating the same principles that he had fought for in 1856.

Throughout his speech he emphasized that Southerners and Northerners were equal under the law and that the federal government could not legally interfere with any domestic affair, including slavery. To answer the charge that he was conspiring with the Republicans he turned the tables on the Breckinridge Democrats, accusing them of being responsible for Lincoln's successes: "Lincoln never had a ghost of a chance or a ray of hope of his election, without the aid of the Breckinridge men of the North."

In the last of his speech the Illinoisan denounced disunion, expressing sentiments popular with many Tennesseans: "The election of no man on earth

[65] Memphis *Daily Appeal*, Oct. 20, 1860.
[66] Oct. 25, 1860.
[67] Oct. 25, 1860.
[68] Memphis *Avalanche*, *Daily Appeal*, Oct. 25, 1860.

by the people, according to the Constitution is, of itself, justification for disunion. . . . We have already secured Democratic members of Congress, who, together with those elected in November, will hold the majority in connection with the South against the Black Republicans and prevent them from carrying out any improper designs." He thought that secession provided no remedy for the problems facing the country. To the contrary, he said, "The one mode of preserving" the Union was "by maintaining, inviolate, every duty imposed by it." He reasserted: "I am for maintaining this, a government of laws, in opposition to mob violence and lynch law, and disunion and secession."

The undertone of this talk was a defense of his own character. Like Yancey, Douglas felt that he must defend his conduct; consequently, he sought to show that he was acting honorably, was consistent, and was moved by worthy motives.

In some respects the speech is significant for what Douglas did not say. At no time did he ask for support at the polls; he never indicated what he might or might not do if he were elected. He referred neither to Bell nor the Constitutional Union party. He cast no aspersions on the character of Lincoln. He completely ignored Yancey, making no mention of his northern tour, then in progress; he directed his attacks mainly at Breckinridge and Jefferson Davis.

This two-and-a-half-hour address, with its detailed interpretation of popular sovereignty, fell short of being a great stirring appeal to save the Union. Seemingly it lacked fire and inspiration. The noble intentions of Douglas cannot be denied, but the execution of those intentions missed the mark.

THE RESULTS

Many persons of Memphis must have been near exhaustion when election day finally came, November 6, 1860. One or two political meetings had been held almost every weekday night for four months. Hundreds of speeches were delivered. The quantity of gunpowder used to fire salutes was enormous. Hardly a week passed without at least one parade. At moments when the local scene became dull there were always barbecues and rallies in nearby counties to attend. No record exists concerning the amount of liquor consumed in toasting the respective candidates, a typical custom of the day, but it is likely that, if Memphis were like other river towns, the hundred and twenty-five saloons poured out barrels in the cause of conviviality. Furthermore, no record is extant of the fist fights that must have ensued when words became inadequate. Nevertheless, the newspapers' reports are sufficient to indicate the intensity of the campaign.

Bell carried Tennessee, winning 69,710 votes; Breckinridge polled 65,053; and Douglas, a poor third, received only 11,384 votes. Bell showed his greatest strength in eastern Tennessee; Breckinridge was strongest in middle

Tennessee; and Douglas won most of his votes in the southwestern counties near Memphis.[69] Bell's victory represented strictly a Whig vote, varying little from the Whig vote of the past twenty years. He probably won because the Democratic vote was split between his two opponents.[70]

In the Tenth Congressional District, Bell likewise led with 7094 votes, but contrary to the trend in the state as a whole, Douglas was second with 5183 votes, while Breckinridge polled only 2481.[71] In only one of the five counties did Breckinridge top Douglas, and then by a plurality of thirty-one votes. Nearby Tipton County, just north of Shelby, but in another congressional district, gave Douglas more votes than either of his opponents, and the city of Memphis also put Douglas first.

In many ways the outcome of the election in the Tenth Congressional District represented a real triumph for the Douglas Democrats, for more than twice as many persons in southwestern Tennessee preferred Douglas to Breckinridge. In contrast to the situation in neighboring states,[72] loyalties to Douglas and his cause were maintained, and a state organization remained in the field even though opposition seemed futile. Furthermore, the Douglas vote in the Tenth Congressional District was sufficient to spell defeat for Breckinridge and the secessionists in Tennessee and to throw the election to Bell, whose plurality was less than five thousand votes. A positive expression of pro-Union sympathy was probably Douglas' real objective, regardless of whether the votes were cast for him or for Bell. Douglas and his followers took satisfaction in the belief that, for the moment, they had foiled the conspiracy of the extremists to bring about a *coup d'etat* and to sweep the entire South into immediate secession.[73]

Obviously many factors accounted for the outcome of the election in southwestern Tennessee. First, traditional ties among old-time Whigs were strong enough to assure the Constitutional Unionists of a vote large enough to defeat a divided Democratic party. Second, the strong local Douglas organization, the efforts of the Memphis *Appeal*, and the speaking of Douglas in western Tennessee prevented complete annihilation of the Douglas wing. Third, Yancey and the "bolters" seemingly could find no arguments at the moment strong enough to win those Memphis business interests who saw in secession a threat to their prosperity. Fourth, the Breckinridge forces probably were ineffective in gaining the support of the foreign-born—the Irish and Germans; and this group naturally preferred Douglas to Bell, who was tainted with Know-Nothingism. Fifth, the frenzy which was sweeping the lower South had not gained sufficient momentum in Memphis by election time to influence the vote.

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[69] Marguerite Bartlett Hamer, "The Presidential Campaign of 1860 in Tennessee," *East Tennessee Historical Society Pub*., no. 3 (Jan., 1931), 3–22.

[70] Thomas Perkins Abernethy, *From Frontier to Plantation in Tennessee* (Chapel Hill, N.C., 1932), p. 336.

[71] *Tribune Almanac*, 1861, p. 54.

[72] In Mississippi the Douglas organizations had completely disintegrated; consequently, Douglas ran third in every county of the state and polled only 3,597 votes in widely scattered areas (Rainwater, pp. 135–160, 198–199).

[73] For an excellent discussion of Douglas' motives in the campaign in the border states, see Nevins, II, 293–295.

But the pro-Union victory in Tennessee was a hollow one. Once the election was over, the pro-Union forces relaxed, and the secessionist forces doubled their efforts. Within a year Tennessee was caught up in the onrushing tide of secession. Political figures who had supported Bell and Douglas, perhaps somewhat awed by the rising tide of revolution, joined in the movement to split the Union asunder.

The Annual Meeting of the Pennsylvania Anti-Slavery Society, 1860

J. CALVIN CALLAGHAN

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On Thursday evening, October 25, 1860, a reporter climbed an iron stairway into the recently erected Public Hall on the main street of Kennett Square, Pennsylvania. To reach this Chester County village he had traveled thirty-one miles southwest from Philadelphia. He may have come along what today is U.S. Highway No. 1, then the Baltimore Turnpike, or perhaps he purchased passage on the Baltimore Central Railroad, constructed the previous year. This reporter, a Mr. Townsend, representing the Republican Philadelphia *Press*, was about to witness the third session of the twenty-fourth annual meeting of the Pennsylvania Anti-Slavery Society.[1]

Townsend was the sole "neutral" journalist on the scene, though Oliver Johnson, editor of the *National Anti-Slavery Standard*, was there, and Society members furnished reports for the *Standard* and *Liberator*. In fact, this meeting was singularly neglected by the local press.[2] If on this basis one were to appraise its contemporary significance, it might be concluded that it was of import chiefly to the stalwart abolitionists who traveled to attend it, and to those local folk whose curiosity would be stirred by so radical a convention. Typical of the latter might be the German gentleman with a flask of gin, who applauded all remarks while present, but every five minutes withdrew to sing snatches of Schiller outside the hall.

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[1] Although the *Press* and other sources labeled it the twenty-third meeting, it was the twenty-fourth annual convening on the twenty-third anniversary of a society founded between Jan. 31 and Feb. 3, 1837. It was properly labeled in the New York *National Anti-Slavery Standard*, the Boston *Liberator*, and the official meeting call. (Minutes of the Society's Executive Committee, Library of the Historical Society of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia, p. 47.)

[2] Of the Philadelphia papers, the pro-Lincoln *North American and United States Gazette*, *Daily News*, *Public Ledger*, and *Sunday Dispatch* (save for a letter from the Society's secretary on Oct. 28) made no mention of this meeting, nor did the weekly *Friend* or *Friends' Intelligencer*. The politically neutral *Inquirer* (Oct. 26) ran the briefest of announcements under "Local Intelligence, Miscellaneous." The Democratic *Morning Pennsylvanian*, in editorial comment (Oct. 29), misinterpreted the meeting as evidence that the abolitionists were supporting Lincoln. Only the *Press* carried a fairly full account (Oct. 27, 29) though the Republican *Daily Evening Bulletin* reprinted the morning *Press* story with an introductory note (Oct. 27). Of the weeklies in Chester County, the Republican *Village Record and Register and Examiner* reprinted the *Press* account (Oct. 30) and reprinted a letter on a controversy growing out of the meeting (Nov. 6). The pro-Douglas *Jeffersonian* (Nov. 3) reprinted verbatim the *Press*-derived *Village Record* account, and (Nov. 10) its controversial letter. The pro-

Yet on at least two counts this provincial gathering has a certain historical-rhetorical stature. About two decades previously the American Anti-Slavery Society had been gradually superseded in importance by various state societies, which, through their more concentrated local focus and their fusing of the abolitionist and women's rights causes, had greatly expanded the national movement.[3] In this Kennett Square meeting, then, we can scrutinize the *modus operandi* of one of these state organizations. Moreover, these diehards met less than two weeks before Lincoln's election: neither this candidate nor his party could they officially support. On the eve of the Civil War their deliberation provided a crucible for heating the very issues which led to that war. In a small town a small group of citizens talked, and they were representative of those who rendered resolution of these issues by the sword inevitable.

Perhaps on a third count, too, this meeting is of more than passing interest. For to it, as we shall later see, came a Negro named Purvis and a young girl, to be christened by Mr. Townsend a "juvenile Joan of Arc."

The Meeting

Kennett Square was a community of substantial dwellings, where "an unusual degree of intelligence permeates the yeomanry of the adjoining districts." A mile east stood Longwood Meeting House, site of annual meetings of the Progressive Friends, among whom were numbered many of the leading members of the Anti-Slavery Society. Antislavery sentiment in the area was strong, though not all local supporters sympathized with the radicals who dominated the Society.

Exactly how many persons—the bulk of them from Philadelphia and its environs[4]—attended this two-day meeting we cannot now know, or of those who did attend, is it known how many were bona-fide members and how many merely onlookers. Most of the sessions, however, filled the Boro Hall, the capacity of which may have exceeded two hundred.[5]

Lincoln *Chester County Times* ran a story obviously based on the *Press* report (Nov. 3). In 1860 there were no newspapers in Kennett Square, or in neighboring West Grove or Oxford.

[3] Dwight Lowell Dumond, *Antislavery Origins of the Civil War in the United States* (Ann Arbor, Mich., 1939), pp. 87–88.

[4] Philadelphia *Inquirer*, Oct. 26, 1860.

[5] The Hall was razed in 1905. A photograph of its facade is in Kennett Square *News*

The building was Quaker-plain in architecture. A double stairway curved up to entrance doors. Inside was a square room with whitewashed walls. Two oil lamps hung from the ceiling. Windows were uncurtained, a few being covered with fragments of newspapers. At the rear a large stove may have heated the late October air—we are not told of the weather.

People crowded the hard wooden benches. In front, clustered around the lectern, were the hard-core Quakers, male and female, old and young, with their broad-brimmed hats and gray bonnets. There was no segregation: Negroes and whites sat side by side. But toward the rear, in front of standing "village idlers and curious Republicans and Democrats" were "half a dozen seats crowded with negroes." Most of these were in "delapidated" attire, some "elegently dressed." They listened attentively, though "one or two" slept.[6]

Interest lies in what these delegates on this occasion chose to talk about, and the words they spoke on the momentous issues of their time, viewed within the routine context of the six sessions comprising their convention.

Call to order came at eleven o'clock on Thursday morning by President James Mott. Lucretia Mott set the tone: "We have no religious observance with which we mark the beginning of these meetings, but our hearts well up nevertheless with grateful joy at the signs of the times, and the evidences of approaching triumph to the cause in which we are engaged."[7] Secretary J. M. McKim agreed that the Society did not begin with religious ceremonial: "But if any were to infer from this, that it . . . is actuated by no deep religious principle, he would fall into a very great mistake. The antislavery movement is, in a high degree and in the best sense of the word, a religious movement. It was started by men who walked with God, and whose hearts had been touched as with a live coal from off His holy altar." Chandler Darlington opined that "time could be better employed than in reading long passages from the Bible, and making formal prayers"—an opinion shared by E. M. Davis, a practical man, who suggested that the assembly "now proceed to work" and moved appointment of specified members to business, finance, and nominating committees.[8] Adjournment followed a greeting from the Reverend Hiram P. Crozier, who had come from Brooklyn at the invitation of Oliver Johnson.

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and Advertiser, June 7, 1940. Two lifelong residents who recall the building estimate its capacity at 200 and 1600, respectively; the lower figure appears closer to the truth.

[6] Philadelphia *Press*, Oct. 27, 1860.

[7] All quotations, unless otherwise noted, are from the most complete account, supplied by Secretary McKim, in New York *National Anti-Slavery Standard*, Nov. 3. Philadelphia *Press* and Boston *Liberator* (Nov. 9, 1860) accounts are also used, sometimes for corroborating, usually for supplementary, details. *Standard* and *Press* reports of these speeches inconsistently shift person and tense; where necessary, pronouns and verbs are here amended to simulate the speaker's actual words.

[8] Named to the key business committee to draft resolutions were Mary Grew, Chairman, Simon Barnard, Hiram P. Crozier, Oliver Johnson, Mahlon B. Linton, Lucretia Mott, Treasurer Sarah Pugh, Vice-Presidents Robert Purvis and Thomas Whitson.

On Thursday afternoon the Secretary read a letter from Garrison—whose promise to be present could not be kept because of "a severe attack of bronchitis"—then delivered the lengthy report of the executive committee, a review of the past year's gains. Well over half of this report was devoted to commendation of "*the* event of the year," John Brown's raid. Other commentary was devoted to (1) a reversed fugitive-slave trial in Philadelphia, a subsequent unsuccessful attempt to rescue the slave, "the first overt act of the kind in the history of" the city, and the subsequent conviction, fining, and imprisonment of seven leaders of the attempt; (2) "the political happenings of the year," including the reelection of a sympathetic Philadelphia mayor, the election of Governor Curtin and five Philadelphia congressmen, all pledged to resist extension of slavery, and the probable election of Lincoln. This last prediction led to a compendium of the official attitude toward the Republican party.

The report concluded with a summary of the year's work, which in turn gives an intimate glimpse of the way in which such state organizations enhanced their cause: "meetings, lectures, conventions; the Bazaar; the distribution of books and pamphlets; the circulation of newspapers, and of petitions for signatures." After considerable discussion of the election issue portion, the report was accepted. The treasurer then reported.[9] The business committee recommended five of its resolutions. The election issue, embodied in one of them, was again the focus of acrid controversy during the remainder of Thursday afternoon and evening.

In a quieter mood the group reassembled on Friday morning. Editor Johnson requested support of the *Standard's* effort to acquire able writers and increase its circulation to 100,000. There was talk of the value of distributing literature. The finance committee chairman appealed for funds.[10] At the fifth session in the afternoon seriatim consideration of resolutions began and the first five were approved. In the evening two additional motions were passed, an eighth tabled, "the evening being far advanced." All officers were reelected, and the Society adjourned sine die.

The high point of this convention lay in parliamentary action on eight resolutions, showing what radical abolitionists were thinking and saying on the eve of the war. The last of the eight presented an issue with which this Society perhaps did not care to cope; more likely, the members were simply weary at the close of their final session. After brief remarks it was laid on the table and died with adjournment—the sole resolution from which approval was withheld. Reproaching the North for trading with the slaveholding South, it omitted any recommendation to embargo such trade.[11] Four resolutions were adopted without debate, apparently without dissent. Two of these redundantly expressed confidence in the downfall of slavery. The others memorialized Theodore Parker and advocated state legislation to protect the freedom of escaped slaves.

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[9] Annual receipts were $4,741.26; expenditures, $4,696.26; balance, $45.

[10] When the afternoon session began, $290 had been collected, and an additional $15 was immediately contributed.

[11] Resolution No. 8: "That while we see the penalty for the sin of slavery in the impoverished soil and the depraved morals of the South, we of the North cannot claim exemption from the consequences of our part in this great sin while we con-

Although the three remaining resolutions passed, they evoked areas of disagreement. In one the area was meager, a motion dealing with the role of the church in the movement, chiding reluctant clergy and commending those holding Dr. Cheever's activist views. In a rambling discourse on the church J. W. Thorne designated it "a dead weight on the car of freedom." The resolution was unanimously adopted, but Cheever's views occasioned considerable intermittent comment after its passage.

John Brown's raid had usurped more than half of the executive committee's report on Thursday afternoon, and had then stimulated lively debate. On the second afternoon a resolution was introduced, hailing public response to the raid.[12] The emerging issue was the relative merit of words and deeds, the justifiability of employing force in advancing a righteous cause. Several members commended Brown, one asserting that he "had done infinitely more by his action . . . than all the Anti-Slavery Societies would do by their talking." Others countered that "neither the ballot nor the sword can abolish slavery. . . . The pen is mightier. . . . Slavery is a disease of the head and heart." Or in the moral accents of Lucretia Mott: "Our weapons are drawn only from the armory of Truth; they are those of faith and hope and love . . . of moral indignation strongly expressed against wrong." The resolution, however, had been circumspectly drafted to compromise this issue. When Mary Grew pointed out that much of the discussion was extraneous, since the motion did not condone violence, debate subsided and the resolution passed.

Buried in the middle of this roster of resolutions was the crucial issue of the time: support of Lincoln and his party. The compulsive character of this issue is illustrated by its utter dominance of debate during all save the opening session of the convention.

Argument against support was presented at length in the Executive Committee report on the first afternoon. Until the Constitution—"an infamous bargain, binding the Free States to the support of slavery"—was annulled, there could be no participation in politics. "Uncompromising Abolitionists" could not vote for Lincoln, because of his position on the Fugitive-Slave Law, his unwillingness to permit Negroes to vote, "his declared hostility,

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tinue our commercial intercourse with the slaveholder, and freely partake of the produce of the unrequited toil of the poor slave." Mrs. Mott, rather than the business committee, proposed this resolution.

[12] Resolution No. 4: "That one of the most important signs of the times which the last year has developed, is the sympathy with John Brown, which has extensively pervaded the North, and found expression in the pulpit, on the platform, and through the press; indicating that, whatever theories men may hold respecting State rights and constitutional obligations, there lives and burns in the Northern heart a genuine admiration of heroism, and a genuine sympathy with the victims of oppression."

except in a contingency not probable, to the abolition of slavery in the District of Columbia." There was no hope for progress under his *administration.* His *election,* on the contrary, by the votes of others, was to be saluted "as a most gratifying occurrence." It would signify "no further compromises with slavery."

This immediately induced controversy. Johnson hastened to confront the perplexing key question: "What right have I to rejoice with the Republican Party when I refuse to join it?" His answer was analogical:

> I rejoice with the Church of the Puritans and the friends of Dr. Cheever at the prospect of their triumph over . . . their enemies. . . . But am I bound, therefore, as a matter of consistency, to join them? To join Dr. Cheever's church I must . . . assent to a theological creed which is repugnant to my convictions, and this I cannot do with a good conscience. So, also, with the political Church. . . . I cannot assent to the "compromises" of the Constitution; and, therefore, I cannot join the Republican Party. But I will rejoice . . . in its triumph over its and our enemy, the pro-slavery Democratic party. . . . I don't want Abolitionists to go [sic] the ballot-box. But if people will vote, then let them . . . vote on the side of freedom and against slavery; and in their doing so I shall ever rejoice.

Mary Grew, less compromising, judged Lincoln less "honest" than he seemed. To this extreme statement at least four members objected.

Later that afternoon this issue ramified into a subissue, the Constitution. Darlington intended to vote for Lincoln, "without inconsistency," because the Constitution could not be construed as a proslavery document: "It is susceptible of and has received various constructions. Under a pro-slavery government, such as this has been from its foundation, the Constitution has become, by interpretation, more and more pro-slavery. With a pro-slavery Supreme Court one concession to the South after another has been made . . . till now a warrant is claimed from it for slavery, such as the men who made it never dreamed of. The Constitution is . . . as justly susceptible of an anti-slavery as of a pro-slavery construction." Johnson rejoined that since Lincoln did not concur in this interpretation, Darlington had not escaped the great dilemma.

At the evening session this was again the central theme, with long speeches by Crozier, Reuben Tomlinson, Robert Purvis, and Anna Dickinson. On Friday morning Eusebius Barnard explained why he would reluctantly vote for Lincoln.

On Friday afternoon, when the resolution withholding Republican support[13] actually became pending business, additional debate ensued. Darlington, McKim, Johnson, Mrs. Grew, Barnard, and Caleb Jackson reiterated the previous arguments, pro and con, over and over again. Jackson adduced another arresting analogy: "If a man found himself on board of a pirate ship at a time when they were about to choose new officers—the choice being between the old captain and mate who gloated in human blood, and new officers who, though still pirates . . . would be less cruel in the pursuit of their bloody trade . . . ought he not to vote, and ought he not to vote for the more humane captain and mate?"

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[13] Resolution No. 5: "That while we hail, as a token of greatly improved public sentiment, the existence of the Republican party of the United States, and while we rejoice to see men coming up into it from the other political parties, we protest against the inconsistency of Abolitionists giving it their support; first, because such support involves a pledge to return the fugitive slave, and, second, because the Presidential candidate of the party is heartily opposed to the political enfranchisement of colored men, is in favor of a fugitive slave statute, and though he has 'very distinctly made up' his mind

There resulted no real resolution of this irreconcilable conflict; consensus was impossible. Each delegate had already decided whether he could compromise his principles sufficiently to vote for the least evil among the presidential candidates. Strategically an attempt was made to table this motion. When this failed, it is significant to note the action taken: the resolution passed, though by what majority is not known. It is equally significant to note the compelling grip it held upon members' attention: even after passage, at the final evening session, it was the subject of redundant but animated oral strife.

THE NEGRO

Of the addresses delivered during this meeting, the most conspicuous contemporaneously—and through its journalistic aftermath most influential upon regional public opinion—was a vitriolic attack upon George Washington and Thomas Jefferson by a Negro member of the Society, one of its two vice-presidents, Robert Purvis.

Then fifty years of age, Purvis had played a long, active role in the antislavery movement.[14] He had been born in Charleston, South Carolina, his mother a free Negro of Moorish descent, his father a white native of England. In childhood he had been nurtured by his father's abolitionist sentiments and by perusal of books on slavery.[15] He had been educated at Amherst College. Though his coloring was such that he readily could have "passed," he never chose to do so.[16]

'that Congress possesses the constitutional power to abolish' slavery in the District of Columbia, yet is not in favor of such abolition, excepting with the consent of a large number of the slaveholders of the District." Note the identity between the reasons cited here and those in the executive committee report.

[14] No biography of Purvis has been published. Except where otherwise noted, data are drawn from Helen Beatrice Whittaker, "The Negro in the Abolitionist Movement 1830–1850," unpub. thesis (Howard Univ., 1935), pp. 18–21; and Clarice Alverta Richardson, "The Antislavery Activities of Negroes in Pennsylvania," unpub. thesis (Howard Univ., 1937), pp. 10–55, *passim.*

[15] Purvis to Garrison, Aug. 22, 1853: "My own early detestation of slavery was owing, doubtless, to the seeds implanted in my bosom by my revered parent, by furnishing me with Dr. Torrey's Portraiture of Slavery, and the work entitled 'Sandford and Merton.'" (Carter G. Woodson, *The Mind of the Negro as Reflected in Letters Written during the Crisis 1800–1860* [Washington, 1926], p. 196.)

[16] "He was so nearly white that he was generally taken to be so. . . . He might easily

When the American Anti-Slavery Society was formed in 1833, Purvis signed its Declaration of Principles, the most prominent of three Negro signers, and was appointed to its board of managers. He held this post for many years, served on various committees, as vice-president, and in 1848 as president. One of the top leaders in the Pennsylvania Society, he attended its founding meeting in 1837, and was elected its president in 1851. In Philadelphia, in 1838, he founded the Vigilance Committee; he was known as the father of the "underground railroad" in that city, his home being one of its stations. A wealthy businessman, who had inherited considerable property, he supported the cause financially.[17]

Although determined never to speak at meetings, once a debate on slavery had begun he could not hold himself in check; and his outbursts were consistently extremist.[18] His indignation is manifested by the fact that when his children were not permitted to attend public school, he refused to pay his taxes.[19] A man whose beliefs thus stemmed from emotional as well as logical and ethical motives might be expected unintentionally to creat a sensation if a suitable stimulus presented itself. At this meeting in Kennett Square it did.

A minor flurry occurred on the first morning. When the Reverend Crozier greeted the assembly, he somewhat pompously averred his loyalty: "I am always at home in an anti-slavery gathering. I have never known the time when I was not an Abolitionist. I have never had the consciousness of prejudice against color. . . . I have eaten with black men; I have *slept* with a

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have passed as a white man. . . . He seems to have grown more impatient and irascible as the heavy burden of his people has been lightened. Because all their rights have not been accorded to them, he sometimes seems to deny that any of their rights have been recognized." (Samuel J. May, *Some Recollections of our Antislavery Conflict* [Boston, 1869], pp. 288–289.) Mrs. Purvis was also active in the cause (*ibid.*, pp. 230–231). A photograph of Purvis appears in Carter G. Woodson, *The Negro in Our History*, 8th ed. (Washington, 1945), p. 291.

[17] At the 1854 Pennsylvania meeting Purvis contributed $20, the fourth largest of fifty-three pledges (Richardson, p. 49).

[18] At the 1857 American Society meeting, after protesting his usual reluctance to speak, Purvis affirmed his inability to speak without passion: "Sir, let others who can speak coolly on this subject. I cannot, and I will not." He then characterized the Constitution as an "infamous document and one of the most atrocious and damnable laws that ever disgraced the annals of despotism." (New York *National Anti-Slavery Standard*, May 23, 1857.) At the 1851 meeting of the Pennsylvania Society he attacked the Fugitive Slave Law as "infernal and damnable" (*National Anti-Slavery Standard*, Oct. 16, 1851; Salem, Ohio, *Anti-Slavery Bugle*, Oct. 25). At the 1859 meeting he concluded a fervid speech: "I would welcome the bolt, whether coming from heaven or hell, that would shiver the American union to pieces!" (*National Anti-Slavery Standard*, Oct. 15, 1859.) He viewed John Brown as "the Jesus Christ of the Nineteenth Century" (Philadelphia *Press*, Oct. 29, 1860).

[19] His school tax was the second highest in his township. Enclosing a copy of his letter of Nov. 5, 1853, to the Collector of Taxes, for publication in the *Freeman*, he wrote to Burleigh: "The continued high-handed exclusion of my children from the Public School in this Township, against law, justice and decency, perplexes and excites a spirit of belligerency, at war with the peace of my soul and body." (Woodson, pp. 178–179.)

black man; and this, perhaps, is as severe a test as a man's anti-slavery character can be put to." To Purvis this protested too much, and in the afternoon he responded. He was "glad to see" Crozier at the meeting; this platform was a "free" one, and to it were welcome "speakers of every variety of opinion": "But, Sir, I utterly repudiate the idea that social intimacy with colored men is a test of anti-slavery character. Sir, what has eating with a man, or sleeping with a man, to do with the question of human rights? This, Sir, is novel anti-slavery doctrine; and, in the name of the cause, I utterly, and, in my own name, scornfully repudiate it! Sir, we ask no favors of any man. . . . A white man may eat and otherwise associate with colored men, without conferring thereby any favor. It is quite possible that the favor may be on the other side!" The incident quickly ended when Crozier, though rejoining belligerently that the "rebuke does not touch me," beat a strategic retreat.

That evening, however, when Crozier spoke again, his Republican sympathies—particularly his stand on the Constitution—baited Purvis into another outburst, which had wider ramifications. At one point Crozier said: "People say the Constitution is pro-slavery, because slavery has lived and thrived under it. But, sir, anti-slavery is going to live and thrive under it. . . . I take the broad ground that the Constitution is a Chart of Freedom. . . . Thomas Jefferson . . . did he mean that it should be the prop of slavery? Look at his Ordinance of 1787, look at his speeches and his writings. He did not seem to regard the Constitution in the light in which it is now read; and will any one say he was not a good anti-slavery man?" Two officers in that audience did so say. James Mott called out, "Actions speak louder than words"; and Purvis, "He sold his own daughter." Crozier's rejoinder failed to satisfy: "Did not Peter swear and deny his Master, and did he not afterwards repent?"

When Crozier concluded, Purvis rose. Characteristically, he had "none but a friendly feeling toward" the Republican party, but in it were leaders he must denounce—Greeley particularly, and others who, like Dr. Sumner Stebbins in his audience, favored colonization. On the Constitution and the Founding Fathers he generated unconditioned fury:

> I am astonished at the audacity of the gentleman . . . in . . . claiming Thomas Jefferson to be an anti-slavery man. Sir, Thomas Jefferson was a slaveholder; and I hold all slaveholders to be tyrants and robbers. It is said that Thomas Jefferson sold his own daughter; this, if true [raising his voice and speaking in a manner highly impassioned], proves him to have been a *scoundrel* as well as a tyrant! [Sensation]. . . . I have listened with pain to remarks that have been made . . . in eulogy of the Constitution. One gentleman argues in its defence the purity and philanthropy of its framers. Sir, I am free to confess that I have no veneration for the founders of this government. It tramples me and my whole race in the dust, declaring that a black man has no rights that a white man is bound to respect. Such a government I pronounce to be a piratical, and not a republican, government. I do not share with others in their veneration for the "Father of our

> country." . . . General Washington was a slaveholder; General Washington, as President of the United States, signed the Fugitive Slave Bill; General Washington tried, under that bill . . . to recover from New Hampshire a poor woman, flying through perils and toils (thereby showing a truer courage than ever he did) that she might escape the yoke of slavery on his plantation [hisses near the door].

Purvis subsequently realized that he had gone too far, outraging public taste. He even apologized for his intemperance the following morning, but in no way reduced the alarming quality of his views. He also approached reporter Townsend, requesting him to tone down his account of this speech, which Townsend did do. The headline of the *Press* story, read by Philadelphians on Saturday morning, was THE UNION DENOUNCED—WASHINGTON AND THE PATRIOTS CONDEMNED.

The *Press* story may be suspect, for its lead suggests bias[20] and it was published under abnormal compositorial circumstances.[21] Its account of Purvis' remarks, however, does not differ appreciably from that in the *Standard* version quoted above, devised by McKim, and the reluctant testimony of the latter employs wording clearly capable of begetting controversy. Yet the *Press* account was resented by those who controlled the Society. Reading it upon his return to the city, McKim hastened to insert in the Philadelphia *Sunday Dispatch* a letter which only added fuel to the flame:

> I had made a faithful report of all the proceedings, a part of which, at his request, I gave the reporter. He thanked me, and hoped I would not be displeased when I should see an account in print, as he would have to dress it up and "put a flash heading to it in the style of the *New York Herald*." I said I did not care . . . if only he published the proceedings faithfully. . . . But I find on opening the paper this morning, that a large portion of the proceedings are omitted; that others, writen in the flash and perversive style of Bennett's *Herald*, are added, and that the whole is presented in a form so incoherent and defective and . . . exaggerated, as to make a most unjust and injurious impression. . . . The injustice done Mr. Purvis by the wanton recklessnes of this article, however, might possibly prove more serious. His position is somewhat peculiar, and to make him an object of hostile observation at a time of excitement like the present, is, both for his and other people's peace, a rather dangerous experiment.[22]

[20] "The excitement in regard to approaching disunion has been pretty well ventilated in *The Press,* as inaugurated at the South by the Secessionists of the Yancey and Breckinridge school. It is a matter of curiosity to note the attitude of the extremists of the North concerning the mooted separation. These doctrines are expounded, of course, by the disciples of Garrison and Mott, and a Convention of the Philadelphia Abolitionists being advertised at a village not far remote from the city, we have chronicled it below as a matter of local news." (Philadelphia *Press,* Oct. 27, 1860.)

[21] "The report of the first day's proceedings . . . was necessarily mutilated in Saturday's edition, consequent upon the deranged condition of our composing room. . . . Many addresses were of no possible interest to readers, and the whole transcript . . . would have engrossed an entire page of the newspaper. Our foreman, therefore, judiciously adapted the supply of copy to the limited amount of space, and placed before the public those portions of the report most interesting and exciting." (Philadelphia *Press,* Oct. 29, 1860.)

[22] Oct. 28, 1860.

This protest seems scarcely justified. On Monday Townsend refused to admit any fundamental inaccuracy in his report. Moreover, he was vindicated by the testimony of twenty-nine other men who attended the meeting. In a letter to the *Press* they declared:

> We feel it to be but simple justice to your reporter to state that his account of the speech made by the said Purvis was true and faithful so far as it went, but we regard it as under rather than over the mark. The vituperative epithets applied to Washington; the charges brought against Jefferson and other founders of our Republic; . . . was even more rancorous and insulting than the report in *The Press*. We hope for the peace and credit of our community, that such an outrage upon the memory of the sacred and venerated dead may never be repeated in Kennett Square.[23]

It seems clear that Robert Purvis did launch a frontal assault upon sacred ideas and persons, reflecting not only his own violent, understandably prejudiced frame of reference, but also the typical configuration of abolitionist philosophy. Perhaps the most significant local effect of this convention was the adverse publicity engendered by his intemperate address. One of the items the people of Philadelphia were talking about a scant week before the presidential election was this altercation.[24] If the prime function of agitation is to stir up controversy regardless of its quality or kind, then this meeting on this local level succeeded—though by attacking revered symbols it may well have lost more than it gained.

The Girl

The issue which lured Purvis also gave rise to a speech which has turned out to be a historically significant facet of this otherwise obscure convention. Had Philadelphia readers that week end possessed the gift of prescience, they would have attended more acutely to another portion of the *Press* story, recounting a speech by a young Quaker girl, whose fire matched that of Purvis and whose career was destined to outrival his. For Anna Elizabeth Dickinson attended and addressed this meeting.

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[23] Philadelphia *Press* (Nov. 5, 1860) in West Chester *Village Record* (Nov. 6) and *Jeffersonian* (Nov. 10). Signers of the letter were residents of Kennett Square, some of them abolitionists, for example, Chandler Darlington.

[24] Evidence of this lies in a letter from Lillie Atkinson to Anna Dickinson, (Anna E. Dickinson Papers, Library of Congress), undated, but with internal evidence clearly indicating composition shortly after this meeting, which Lillie had attended: "I was really surprised, upon my return to the city . . . at the numerous questions with which we were assailed, in regard to the *disturbance* &c. And oh! how shamefully Robert Purvis was reproached, condemned, and misjudged. . . . As I was the only one to defend the absent, thee may be assured I fought *desperately* and untiringly in his defence. . . . Though severely tried at the time, I derive comfort from the fact that I succeeded in effectually silencing *two* individuals, at least. I know not what may have been the effect upon others."

She had been personally invited by McKim, who sent to her Philadelphia home a printed announcement of the meeting. In the last paragraph he had crossed out the name of Garrison, listed as a speaker, inserted the names of Crozier, Johnson, Miss Watkins, and Dr. Furness, then appended: "We hope to have Miss Dickinson also. Shall we not?"[25] Who was Anna Dickinson, and what had she done to warrant this special invitation?[26]

Two days after the meeting ended she would become eighteen years of age. Born in Philadelphia, she was descended from a long line of prominent Friends. Her father, a merchant prosperous in early though not in later life, had been a friend of Whittier, a member of the Liberty party, a presidential elector for Birney, and one of the founders of the *Freeman*. His home had been a station on the "underground railroad." One of the tales told by her mother, which enthralled the youthful Anna, recounted how her father had hidden a fugitive slave by thrusting him into a bed between two of her brothers, where he had lain undetected while law officers searched the room. The father had been a speaker for the cause, "logical and impassioned," had in fact died of a heart attack fifteen minutes after exerting himself in an abolitionist speech. But Anna had little opportunity to know him: he died when she was two, leaving his family destitute.

Five children were educated in their home by the cultured, less radical widow. Anna, the youngest, a restless, impatient child, but a diligent student with a good mind, read widely. The regimen was classical. To read Byron, in her seventh year, she had to hide under the bed, and perusal of newspapers of the day was by her own choice. But her command of language she attributed to her mother's instruction.[27] She enjoyed five years of formal Friends' schooling. While still in school, at the age of thirteen, she submitted to the *Liberator* a passionate protest of a "barbarous atrocity," the tar-and-feathering of a Kentucky teacher who had sent an antislavery letter to an Ohio newspaper.[28]

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[25] Dickinson Papers. Anna's sister forwarded the announcement to her in Bucks County, where she was teaching, with a note that her "travelling trunk" would be sent (letter from Susan E. to "My dear Sister," Oct. 19, 1860). Anna may have been planning to attend anyway (postscript in a letter to her from Lillie Atkinson, Sept. 23, 1860). It is possible that her railroad fare was paid. In the Dickinson Papers there is a letter to her from McKim, saying: "We are inviting nobody in particular to attend our meeting, but we are expecting *you* with confidence to be there. Enclosed please find a ticket that will take you, *via Media,* without cost." This letter is dated Oct. 24, with no year. Conceivably this could refer to the 1860 meeting; it is more likely that this subsidy was offered for the 1861 meeting.

[26] Except where otherwise noted, data are drawn from Judith Anderson, "Anna E. Dickinson, 1842–1932: A Biographical Sketch," unpub. thesis (Lehigh Univ., 1934); James Harvey Young, "Anna Elizabeth Dickinson and the Civil War," unpub. diss. (Univ. of Illinois, 1941); Giraud Chester, *Embattled Maiden: The Life of Anna Dickinson* (New York, 1951).

[27] Philadelphia *Evening Bulletin,* Feb. 20, 1923.

[28] Feb. 22, 1856. Since no manuscript of Anna's speaking is extant, this letter may be studied as illustrative of her radical attitudes and the impassioned style of her dis-

As a result of her family's financial straits and her own determination to contribute to its support, she left school when she was not quite fifteen, to work as a copyist, then to teach, a profession she detested.[29] Despite the opposition of her mother, her real desire was to speak, and to live by speaking. Her motivation was frankly financial, but it derived also from love of the platform. With the first money she ever earned–twenty-five cents for scrubbing a sidewalk–she bought a ticket to hear Wendell Phillips.[30] And she held that "it was in order,–Nature's order,–for the daughter of these parents to be a born lover, and a born fighter, and, also perchance, a born talker."

Her maiden public speech occurred unpremeditatedly when her feminist principles were challenged. She was seventeen; it was Sunday afternoon, January 29, 1860. Her own account[31] of this event forecasts the passion and sincerity, the aptitude for extemporaneous composition and audience adaptation, which were to characterize her speaking at Kennett Square. She had slipped out of the house to hear a Clarkson Hall discussion on "Woman's Rights and Wrongs." One speaker, "a bristling, dictatorial man, with a manner insufferable . . . prowling to and fro in the central aisle . . . shook a beefy forefinger under" her nose. Anna, "with brain, heart, nerve, soul ablaze . . . leaped to her feet" and without recognition by the chair "cried a good many truths in passionate sentences." If his daughters, as he had contended, could not enter the male professions, they were "fools." Then the climax line, shaking her own "slim finger" in *his* face: "In Heaven's name, sir, what else is to be expected of the daughters of such a father"!

After the meeting she ran out the door and home. A week later[32] she ran

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course. The exclamatory tenor of the conclusion renders explicable the profound effect upon later audiences which her utterance produced.

[29] To Ida M. Tarbell she wrote: "Nature may have intended me for a preacher, but I doubt she ever meant me for a teacher." A part of this dislike may have stemmed from her resentment of discrimination against women. Applying for one teaching position which had been filled by a man at $28 a month, she was informed that a girl would be paid $16. Her reply to the appointing committeeman: "Sir, are you a fool, or do you take me for one? Though I am too poor today to buy a pair of cotton gloves, I would rather go in rags than degrade my womanhood by accepting anything at your hands." (Tarbell, "The American Woman: How She Met the Experience of the War," *American Magazine*, 69 (1910), 809.)

[30] Gertrude Bosler Biddle and Sarah Dickinson Lowrie, eds., *Notable Women of Pennsylvania* (Philadelphia, 1942), p. 213.

[31] New York *Herald* and Philadelphia *Press*, June 19, 1892. Original MS., in Anna's handwriting, in Dickinson Papers, complete save for a missing first sheet. Anderson (p. 17) cites, but adduces no evidence for, April 3 as this date. Young (p. 7) places it on "one Sunday during January"; Chester (p. 15), "one Sunday in late January." The exact date can be determined. In the cited MS. Anna tells of "looking at the notices, religious and secular, advertised in the Philadelphia Public Ledger of the day before." This advertisement appeared in the *Ledger*, Jan. 28, 1860.

[32] In her MS. for the *Herald* and *Press* she says that women's rights was the Clarkson Hall subject "for two months thereafter." Her recollection was faulty, but it did run for three consecutive weeks. The fourth week the subject shifted to "Mind and Matter." (Philadelphia *Public Ledger*, Feb. 4, 11, 18, 25, 1860.)

again from Clarkson Hall, this time followed by some men who desired to learn whose child she was. Her mother, informed of her daughter's Sabbath act, was aghast: "Oh, that child! that child! I always knew that ungovernable, furious nature would bring her to some bad end." But one of the men proffered a more sensible reaction: "Why, madam, I would almost give my life for a child like that."[33]

Precisely what happened to this girl during the nine months between her first public outburst and the invitation to address the Society is somewhat obscure. Although she continued the drudgery of teaching school, first devotion went to her speeches in small communities around Philadelphia, where even meager fees produced by passing the hat must have heartened her.[34] To Kennett Square in October she came, relatively unknown but filled with enthusiasm for abolitionist doctrine, full of promise as a persuasive speaker, with a courage belying her age and sex.

How often she spoke out cannot be known with certainty, but one would not expect such a girl to keep silence long. There were at least two minor occasions for speaking. On Friday afternoon, during the John Brown debate, she "objected to certain non-resistance sentiments," saying "liberty is dearer than life, and woman's purity dearer than either; and there are cases where nature cries out against a passive willingness to spare a villain's life." This brought a mild reproof from Mrs. Mott, who "regretted to hear from one so young even a hypothetical approval of resort to violence." That evening Anna "added further remarks" to the post-passage discussion of the resolution denying Republican support.[35]

Her major effort, however, came on Thursday evening. The *Press* described the scene thus:

> The next speaker was a Miss Dickinson, . . . handsome, of an expressive countenance, plainly dressed, and eloquent beyond her years. After the listless, monotonous harangues of the previous part of the day, the distinct, earnest tones of this juvenile Joan of Arc were very sweet and charming. During her discourse, which was frequently interrupted, Miss Dickinson maintained her presence of mind, and uttered her radical sentiments with augmented resolution and plainness. Those who did not sympathize with her remarks were softened by her

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[33] Undated Cincinnati *Commercial* clipping, Dickinson Papers, affords another insight into Anna's spirited character: "The close of school every day was the regular signal for a boy mob and a running fight. The other boys gathered in a sort of army and chased the Quaker boys home. . . . Every day, near school-close, the little girl thrust a long iron poker into the fire, heated it red-hot, took the upper end of it in a cloth holder, and, armed with this weapon, sallied forth against the boys who mobbed her big brothers. . . . Every day the battle was repeated with the same result, until the little red-hot poker girl became . . . the terror of all the boys in the neighborhood."

[34] The Dickinson Papers contain evidence that she spoke at Woodstown and Grand Spruce, at Mullica Hill, N.J., at Methodist camp meetings and Quaker gatherings.

[35] The *Standard* includes a quotation from a speech delivered Friday morning. However, this is irrelevant in its context; moreover, it parallels the *Press* report of the peroration of her Thursday evening address. It seems likely that this is a partial transcript of that peroration.

> simplicity and solemnity. Her speech was decidedly the feature of the evening, . . . followed by discussion of prolonged and diversified interest. Miss Dickinson . . . had been solicited several times during the day to address the audience, but waited for the inspiration of the evening, which came in the shape of Mrs. Grew's remarks.

Mary Grew's address had been a formal review of the history of the movement, with an invitation to join it. It is more likely that what provoked Anna was the refusal by Darlington and Crozier, toward the end of the afternoon, to regard the Constitution as "a pro-slavery instrument."

The exact phrasing of her ideas cannot be reconstructed with certitude. But from all of her known rhetoric, her recorded words ring true. Only two accounts of her speech are extant; although each is a partial report, they agree closely. Moreover, she had not talked long before heckling started; and the subsequent pattern of the address became a direct function of audience participation. Thus she began:

> We are told by some that we must support the Constitution, because it is the Constitution; and that we must support the law, because it is the law. But what is the Constitution of the country, and what is the law we are called to obey?
>
> Eminent jurists have told us that there are certain great and inviolable principles common to all mankind. That these principles are the foundation of all law; that any statute of man's devising, any enactment of temporary and selfish expediency, that contravenes these foundation principles is, in its nature, null and void, and has no rightful claim on conscientious minds.
>
> Now, what is the law of this country? It is the law of slavery. A law made to grind the face of God's poor; a law that tramples in the dust all the holiest feelings of our nature; a law that tramples on man's manhood, and makes mockery of woman's womanhood: a law which deserves only to be condemned and abhorred and trampled under foot of men.
>
> And what is the Constitution? It is the fundamental law on which all the slave laws rest. It regards man as property, to be bought and sold, and whipped and bruised and killed all the day long, at the pleasure of those who usurp the title of his owners.

This was as much as Republican auditors could stomach. Heckling began:

DR. STEBBINS: Not at all; I differ with the lady. The Constitution does not recognize property in man. I differ entirely with the speaker.

REV. CROZIER: So do I. I was told that there would be no discussion this evening, and that what was wanted was speakers on the general question. I therefore laid aside my notes, as it had been my intention to speak on the anti-slavery character of the Constitution; but now this subject is introduced I claim the privilege of replying, and mean to do so if it keeps me here till 12 o'clock tonight.

DR. STEBBINS: So am I.

Stamping and applause from the rear of the hall greeted these interruptions. The *Press* portrayed the resultant scene:

There was a great sensation. . . . Miss Dickinson was observed to tremble somewhat. . . . The lady rallied with a pluck and resolution extraordinary for a girl of her years, advanced a step or two toward the audience, and holding forth her hands, continued in a louder and clearer tone which rang in the then perfect silence of the hall very musically and forcibly.

Her rejoinder infused emotional sting into relevant facts and tight inference:

MISS DICKINSON: I say that the Constitution does recognize property in human souls. Does it not do so in a dozen implied ways? You are to send back fugitives from labor, to remand the bleeding victims of the overseer and the slave-driver, who are classed, for no crime of theirs, with the criminal who has broken, of his own will, a compact that he made with the law. The slave can make no compact; he who has been trampled with the beasts, who has been all his lifetime a chattel, whose volition is disowned, whose tears are disregarded, whose wrongs are not wrongs, since he has no rights, is incapable of making a compact. If the word slave is not in the Constitution the idea is. Say what you will, do what you will, the Constitution of this Government does recognize property in human souls.[36]

DR. STEBBINS: No, it don't.[37]

MISS DICKINSON: What does the Republican party maintain? Only that it is opposed to the extension of the evils of slavery. It has virtually said to the slave-driver: Go into your caves and brutal fastnesses, crush there the bones of your victims, bend them, break them, and we will not interfere. The Constitution gives you such rights; we simply claim, that we shall not hear you, nor see you. The Republicans stand upon the same grounds with Lovejoy, who disowned physical interference with slavery, as it was, and who fought it only as it attempted to extend itself.

DR. STEBBINS: Miss Dickinson labors under a mistake. Mr. Lovejoy said no such thing.

MISS DICKINSON: No law can prevent the reclaiming of stolen goods, the forefathers of the negroes were taken from their native land, and no length of possession on the part of the slaveholder can make his slaves other than stolen property. The cry comes up from the mothers and children of the South, am I not a man and a brother? And it is the right and the duty of every human heart in the North to struggle for the restoration of the rights of the negro. That party which openly disowns any sympathy of affiliation with the avowed friends of freedom, whose doctrine is non-intervention, cannot receive the sympathy of the friends of the right, and has built its foundation upon injustice.

DR. STEBBINS: I cannot go beyond the law, which gives the slave-holder certain rights, and I would be a traitor to set aside the guarantee of the Constitution.

MISS DICKINSON: But any human enactment or constitution, coming in contact with fundamental truths, is not law, but injustice.

DR. STEBBINS: No, it is not. You have no right to go behind the Constitution.

MISS DICKINSON: But, sir, as you go to-night to your happy home and see in his sleep that brave boy of yours, and a single hand stronger than yours were stretched forth to take him from you and make him a slave forever, what would you do?

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[36] From the *Press* account, a version with more loaded words.

[37] Reduced applause followed this interruption. The *Standard* account ends at this point; only the *Press* recorded the latter part of the colloquy.

DR. STEBBINS: I would kill him.

MISS DICKINSON: You would not plead for law then, and speak of Constitution, nor should you do so now, since the children of your brethren are thus snatched from their homes every day that you live.

The applause greeting Stebbins' "I would kill him" may have represented perception and appreciation of Anna's master forensic stroke. When she drove the point home with appeals to self-interest and shame, she survived the crisis of the colloquy. When Stebbins interrupted again, a man on the platform admonished the heckler, saying that the speaker was only seventeen and "necessarily timid," while the doctor was accustomed to public speaking. Stebbins apologized, remaining silent for the duration of Anna's speech. Fired as she must now have been by thus overcoming her adversary, she concluded:

> Young girls! I stand here a young girl, pleading for other young girls, whose womanhood and purity are as dear to them as yours to you or mine to me. I ask you to think of these, without power of resistance, in the hands of the brutal slave-driver.
>
> Mothers! I appeal to you. You can enjoy the prattle of your little one as it plays on your knee. And if, perchance, the angel of death should summon it away, you can close its little eyes and fold its dimpled hands across its pulseless breast, and place it in the tomb that waits for it. Not so the slave mother. Her child is not hers. She may not enjoy it living, nor mourn for it as being dead. It is torn from her or she from it, and mother and child are separated, never to meet again.
>
> Young man! you who in the flush of newly reached manhood stepped forth with flushed hope and mien erect to cast your vote at the last election, to cast your suffrage for Andrew Curtin. Suppose that just as you were about to deposit your ballot, a stronger arm had seized yours, and, wrenching the bit of paper from you, had cast it for his opponent, Henry D. Foster—would you call that being represented? But that is the way in which, under this much-praised Constitution, the slaves at the South are represented.[38]

That Anna won her rightful hearing in this forum is manifest. Said Mr. Townsend: "However erratic, enthusiastic, or impracticable her sentiments, they were remarked with the closest attention. The beauty and talent of the young woman exercised a talismanic effect upon even the rudest."

What she said was by no means novel, nor was it original. These were ideas she had been hearing her elders espouse during her entire lifetime, stock evidence and arguments which she purchased ready-made from the extremists whose views appealed to her rebellious soul. The very familiarity of these ideas would produce an impressive effect upon hearers who concurred in them and delighted in their repetition. Similarly, conservative elements in her audience would react to these stereotypes with their own husbanded stereotypes. What made this speech new—and news—was the mouth out of which it sprang—that the speaker was young was somewhat noteworthy, although there were other young speakers there. Moreover, members of the female sex were a novelty neither on this platform nor in the movement. In part, what made this speaker stand out was the *combination* of youth and girlhood. In larger part, it was her emotional frame of reference—her attitudes toward subject, audience, and self—which rendered her persuasive. Her successful proof was both ethical and pathetic.

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[38] The peroration referred to in n. 35.

We have little testimony about how she looked and how she spoke that evening; she was still too new a star in the firmament to induce many reminiscences. But within less than two years her rise to stardom was to become meteoric; and from all we know of her later,[39] we can reconstruct the quality of her utterance at this beginning of her career. She was striking in appearance.[40] Five feet two inches in height, she had a symmetrical, agile frame. Her face was round, complexion fair, with chiseled features: mouth medium, lips full, chin round, jaw Napoleonic, nose large, nostrils thin, Greek forehead, gray eyes, curly dark brown hair flung back. It was her custom to wear a long-sleeved high-necked dress. Her voice was a full contralto, somewhat masculine, penetrating, musical, clear, distinct, and loud, with cadence and a martial ring. Her gestures were few, but rapid, graceful, natural, always motivated. Characteristics of her delivery were emphasis, impassioned feeling, energy, fluency, sincerity, and self-possession. It was once said of her that "she spoke modestly, yet unabashed; and in a few minutes . . . she brought tears to the eyes of half the listeners." Another said: "After she has become warmed with her subject, you are amazed at her beauty. The plain face glows like an astral shade, her cheek flushes and pales with swift emotions—her eyes are luminous with the brave, beautiful soul within."

The directness of her communication and its effect resulted from her rigidly extemporaneous, almost impromptu, method of presentation. Interviewed in later life, she reminisced: "I never wrote a lecture in my life. I selected my subject, made a few notes, enough, possibly, to cover half a sheet of note, studied the matter thoroughly, so that I felt I knew what I was talking about, but I did not know until I had tried it what its real merits were." Was she nervous? "Yes, but my nervousness takes a different form from that of most people. I have no tremors or shaking. I grow rigid and terse [sic—tense?] and every nerve is keenly alive. It affects my voice, and makes it sharp and high, quite unlike my natural voice."[41] But determination she had, and command of language, command of self, command of auditors.

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[39] From sundry critical clippings and a passport granted when she was thirty-three (Dickinson Papers).

[40] For photographs see Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Susan B. Anthony, *History of Woman Suffrage,* II (Rochester, N.Y., 1887), frontispiece; *American Magazine,* 69 (1910), p. 808; Chester, frontispiece and facing p. 19.

[41] Boston *Times,* May 14, 1876.

Little wonder that she was listened to that evening with hope for her forensic future.

This speech brought Anna Dickinson seriously to the attention of local leaders in the movement. During the coming year she was to speak many times near and in Philadelphia, her most important address to be that in Concert Hall the following February.[42] But her national career was to await her presence at the Society's 1861 meeting. Then Garrison was to hear her, be impressed by her, arrange for her to speak in Boston's Music Hall—as a substitute for Wendell Phillips, no less. Fame and fortune followed. She was to be chiefly responsible for Republican victory in the Connecticut election of 1862, and to campaign successfully in New Hampshire and Pennsylvania. She was to speak tirelessly in the cause of the war, incurring in so doing the disfavor of her church.[43] On January 16, 1864, she was to speak in the House of Representatives, introduced by Hamlin, with Lincoln in the audience. For the next thirty years she was to be a stormy petrel on the American platform, one of its highest paid performers.[44]

All this was in store for the little girl who rose to speak that evening in the Boro Hall. It is interesting to speculate what might have transpired had Garrison not been detained in Boston with bronchitis. Had he heard her in 1860, instead of a year later, he might then and there have recognized in her, as did Mr. Townsend, the "juvenile Joan of Arc" which veritably she was.

IN RETROSPECT

In 1860 the nation found itself in crisis. A fateful decision impended. Discussion about it was widespread in the land. We have glimpsed, through a glass darkly, one tiny portion of that communicative process. Of it what can we say, looking backward down a century?

In late October that year a little group of abolitionists met in a Pennsylvania village in annual convention. If rhetoric involves a search for means of persuasion, theirs presents a study in contrasts. They were aware of a coming election, and yet in a sense were oblivious to its portent and its prophecy. They gave advance applause to election of the least objectionable candidate, provided other citizens supplied the requisite votes. On this, it is true, they differed among themselves. Nor were they unanimous on the Constitution as a covenant with heaven or hell. Yet a clear majority could not persuade themselves, or be persuaded, to support the man who would be known as the Great Emancipator. The democratic—and Republican—art of compromise was not theirs. Yet they could compromise—on commercial intercourse with the South, and on John Brown, hailing without condoning his violent approach to their goal.

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[42] Chester, pp. 22–28. Mrs. Mott tried to promote a lecture tour for her (Lucretia Mott to her cousin Lydia, Jan. 22, 1861 [Elizabeth Cady Stanton Papers, Library of Congress]).

[43] She was "disowned for delivering public lectures inconsistent with the peaceable principles of the society" of Friends on March 2, 1864 (William Wade Hinshaw Index, Friends Historical Library, Swarthmore College).

[44] Chester, pp. 3–9, 28–293.

They met without invocation or benediction, aloof from the church, yet criticizing its failure to support their movement wholeheartedly. Among them were names now famous—some of them infamous then. Our historical rhetorical judgment of them today is not that of their peers: they were viewed by many then as a radical, even lunatic, fringe, as enemies of law and order. One of their vice-presidents lent them notoriety. They listened to the speech of a maiden, without completely sensing her potential for fame.

They pleaded for money, appointed committees, heard reports, eulogized a dead colleague, advocated a new law, looked back on a year's gains, and looked forward with hope—a faith almost blind. Were they voices crying in a wilderness? Perhaps they were then. Today, with the perspective hindsight affords, we attend to their voices.

For two days theirs was the typical rhetoric of a convention. From it they wended homeward, to renew their rhetoric of agitation.

The Campaign of Stephen A. Douglas in the South, 1860

LIONEL CROCKER

16

Out of a fragmented Democratic party at the Baltimore Convention emerged a candidate of rare oratorical talent and seasoned political acumen. In American politics split parties rarely win victories at the polls. But in 1860 the "regular" Democrats had confidence in the unique qualifications of their candidate, Stephen A. Douglas. Was he not the only nominee with a substantial following on both sides of the Mason-Dixon line? Could any other Democrat conceivably carry the free states in 1860? Would not any lover of the Union, with a choice between Douglas and union and Lincoln and secession, choose Douglas? Even in the South would true Democrats not vote for Douglas and union rather than for Breckinridge and secession? If the fire-eaters were trying to drive the North into selecting a purely sectional president, thus providing themselves with a pretext for withdrawing from the Union, would it not be possible to show at the ballot box that the sentiment for union was stronger than for secession? And could not many southern voters be persuaded that the Constitution should be upheld, regardless of who was elected?[1] If enough voters in all sections would answer these questions affirmatively, the Democrats could win.

A fundamental tenet with Douglas was that "any political creed which cannot be proclaimed in any portion of our confederacy must be essentially wrong."[2] Believing in the soundness of his own doctrine, and the strategy indicated by the questions just stated, Douglas needed only to get his message to the people. For the first time in American political history a candidate would stump the entire nation.[3] From the middle of July when he left Washington until the election in November he yielded to the importuning of friends to speak in their sections. H. B. Tibbets of Lake Providence, Louisiana, for example, heard Douglas in Concord, New Hampshire, and then made this appeal on August 19: "I write you as a political friend in order to suggest the expediency of your making a tour through the Southern states. You are not understood there and I think justice to yourself demands that you go, address the people, and correct the misrepresentations that have been made to them. I reside in Louisiana, and I am happy to state to you that you have many political friends there. I did not understand your position until I heard you in Concord a few weeks ago."[4]

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[1] In his Chicago speech, May 1, 1861, Douglas gave in retrospect the motivation for his strenuous campaign: "They [the disunionists] desired a Northern Republican to be elected by a purely Northern vote, and then assign this fact as a reason why the sections may not longer live together. If the Disunion candidate in the Presidential contest had carried the United South their scheme was to seize the Capitol last Spring, and by a United South and by a divided North to hold it. That scheme was defeated in the defeat of the Disunion candidate in several of the Southern states." (Chicago *Post*, May 2, 1861.)

[2] New York *Daily Tribune*, July 28, 1860.

The Douglass canvass developed in four stages representing four geographical areas: (1) New York and New England; (2) Virginia and North Carolina; (3) Pennsylvania, Ohio, Indiana and Illinois; and (4) Missouri, Tennessee, Georgia and Alabama. This study deals only with his campaign in the slave states.[5]

After stating his case in New York and New England, southern political leaders helped Douglas map out a two-week campaign in North Carolina and Virginia in late August with this itinerary: August 24, Baltimore, Md.; 25, Norfolk, Va.; 27, Hampton; 27, Old Point Comfort; 28, Petersburgh; 30, Raleigh, N.C.; 30, Weldon; 31, Richmond, Va.; September 1, Staunton; 5, Frederick City; 6, Baltimore, Md.

In the Norfolk and Raleigh addresses Douglas set forth his political philosophy, and substantially repeated it, with adaptation to local conditions, whenever he spoke in the South.[6] What did he hope to accomplish by his campaign in the South? From his speeches one discerns these apparent purposes:

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[3] The news of a presidential candidate speaking all over the country inspired this doggerel (New York *Daily Tribune*, Sept. 6, 1860):

Pray where is Stephen's mother's home
In quest of which her son doth roam.
Is it in the forests Maine?
If not in Yankee land,
Can he the longed for spot in New York see?
In Alabama is it found?
On Mississippi's quaking ground?
Must he return with drooping jaw
From the wild wastes of Arkansas?
Shall disappointment longer vex us
In Louisiana? Or in Texas?
On wild goose chase shall he go
To Territorial Mexico?

[4] For other invitations see Douglas Letters, Univ. of Chicago: H. L. Hopkins, Petersburgh, Aug. 11; H. W. Miller, Raleigh, Aug. 12, 16, 18, 19; John J. Seibles, Montgomery, Aug. 14; J. C. Bradley, Huntsville, Aug. 31; Rev. P. A. B. Meister, Augusta, Oct. 10; L. M. Lanahan, Jackson, Oct. 20; Dr. DuPerrier, New Iberia, Oct. 30; W. C. Bempleton, New Orleans, Nov. 1; P. J. Keegan, Nov. 4.

[5] For a general account of Douglas' 1860 campaign see George Fort Milton, *The Eve of Conflict* (New York, 1934), Ch. XXIX; Roy Franklin Nichols, *The Disruption of American Democracy* (New York, 1948), Ch. XVIII.

[6] The Raleigh speech is in Emerson David Fite, *The Presidential Campaign of 1860*

1. To proclaim once again his doctrine of nonintervention as a basis for the settlement of the slavery question.
2. To divide the vote of the South and show at the ballot box that the sentiment for the Union was stronger than the sentiment for secession.
3. To maintain the Democratic party and, when the secessionists were defeated, to be in a position to dictate its reorganization.
4. To set himself right with his friends in the South and to answer his detractors.
5. To win the presidency by uniting all Union supporters, or at least to throw the election into Congress, where Republicans could control the votes of only fifteen out of thirty-three states.

Early in his first tour, at Norfolk on August 25, Douglas was given a dramatic opportunity to state his love for the Union and his support of the Constitution. At the conclusion of his prepared address he was interrogated by William Lamb, a local Breckinridge elector, about his position on secession and his possible reaction if Lincoln should be elected.

The first question asked: "If Abraham Lincoln be elected president of the United States, will the Southern States be justified in seceding from the Union?" Judge Douglas replied, "To this I emphatically answer No. (Applause) The election of a man to the presidency by the American people in conformity with the constitution of the United States, would not justify any attempt at dissolving this glorious confederacy. (Applause)"

The second question was worded as follows: "If they (Southern States) secede from the Union upon the inauguration of Abraham Lincoln, before he commits an overt act against their constitutional rights, will you advise or vindicate resistance by force to the decision? (Voices, No! No! Bell men say No!)" Douglas replied, "I answer emphatically that it is the duty of the president of the United States, and all others in authority under him to enforce the laws of the United States, passed by Congress, and as the courts expound them. (Cheers)"[7]

An entire column of the *Southern Argus* on August 27, 1860, was given over to Douglas' amplification of this position. His answers clarified the issues that the nation was to face in November and demonstrated the extent to which Douglas was committed to his doctrine of popular sovereignty. The disunion element began to rumble; throughout the North as well as the South, Douglas was denounced for his belief in coercion. But he repeatedly

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(New York, 1911), pp. 277–300; the Norfolk speech is in Norfolk *Southern Argus*, Aug. 27, 1860.

[7] Yancey, on the other hand, was evasive when asked the same questions at Cooper Institute, Oct. 10, 1860 (John Witherspoon DuBose, *The Life and Times of William Lowndes Yancey* [Birminham, 1892], p. 505).

echoed this stand for the Union, as at the Chicago Wigwam, May 1, 1861: "There can be no neutrals in this war—only patriots or traitors." At Norfolk he concluded with this affirmation:

> I did not come here to purchase your votes. I came here to compare notes, and to see if there is not some common principle, some line of policy around which all Union-loving men, North and South, may rally to preserve the glorious Union against Northern and Southern agitators. There is a larger feeling of self pride, of honest ambition, and of patriotism mingled with my efforts in the cause I have undertaken to carry out, than there is a desire or longing to be elected President of the United States. I do not hold that at my period of life it is a great favor to confer on me the high honor of being the Chief Magistrate of this world honored and glorious republic. I would rather hold that it is my interest—as an ambitious man, if you please, to retain my seat and serve my country in the Senate, than accepting the presidental chair should your suffrages elevate me to that high office. But if you and the other National Democrats of the country desire my services, and you select me to carry your banner through a triumphant Presidential canvass you may command my success. (Loud cheers and voices, "We will do it.") But I will not conceal a sentiment or equivocate upon a single question to obtain a man's vote. I desire no man to vote for me, unless he hopes and desires to see the Union maintained and preserved intact by the faithful execution of every act, every line and letter of the written constitution which our fathers bequeathed to us.

The New York Times dispatch from Petersburgh, August 28, reported the popular reaction to Douglas' answers to the questions on Lincoln's possible election and stressed the favorable sentiment for his discussion of popular sovereignty. The account of his activity in and around Norfolk reflected the strenuous nature of the campaign.

> This morning [August 27], Mr. Douglas took an excursion down the bay to Hampton and Old Point Comfort, at both which places he met with a flattering reception.
>
> On returning to Norfolk he took the train at noon for this city [Petersburgh] —33 guns—immense concourse—Jarrett House—speech at hotel—surrounding country—Lamb wrote the questions put at Norfolk, an elector at large for Breckinridge.
>
> The speech of Mr. Douglas at Norfolk is regarded as the boldest and strongest in favor of Popular Sovereignty that he has ever made. It created the greatest sensation and was the subject of discussion all day yesterday. His friends claim that it gained him many hundreds of votes in Norfolk and the reaction has not been stopped since his arrival here.

The name of Douglas is still linked inseparably with the doctrine of popular sovereignty. Because it was the only political tenet ever enunciated by him "that could be torn from its context and set up as a principle,"[8] and because its elucidation formed such an integral part of each address in his southern tours, that portion of the Norfolk speech dealing with this doctrine is presented here in outline form. In the development of this principle Douglas demonstrated the rigor of his logic and the vigor of his style.

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[8] Allan Nevins, "Stephen A. Douglas: His Weakness and His Greatness," *Jour. of the Illinois State Historical Society*, 42 (1949), 385–410.

I. Equality of rights under the Constitution is a fundamental principle of our political system.
II. I deny the right of the federal government to interfere with the local and the domestic institutions of the people either in the states or in the territories of this union.
III. This principle of nonintervention by the federal authority with the domestic affairs of the people is older than our government itself.
    A. We inherited that principle from our revolutionary ancestors.
        1. If you will refer to the history of your colony of Virginia before the revolution you will find that the first cause of quarrel that ever arose between the British colonies and the government of Great Britain was on the question of African slavery.
        2. If you will examine the bill of rights adopted by the first continental Congress in 1774, you will find that they asserted the sole and exclusive power of the colonies through their legislatures to pass laws affecting the domestic policy of each colony.
    B. I have referred to these historical facts in order to guide us in our investigation as to the true line of policy which ought now to be adopted in order to restore a fraternal feeling between the different sections of the Union.
        1. I hold that there is no grievance in this country for which the constitution has not provided the remedy inside the Union.
        2. All we have to do is to maintain the rights of every state and of the citizens of all the states under the constitution and then enforce obedience to their constitution and the constituted authorities of the country. [Cheers]
IV. Having ascertained from reference to political facts that the great struggle of the revolution took place in defence of their right of local self government in the colonies, so far as their domestic concerns were involved, let us see what was the example of our fathers after the revolution had been achieved.
    A. The first territory ever owned by the United States was acquired from the state of Virginia by cession which took place on the first day of March, 1784, in pursuance of a resolution of Congress of 1780.
        1. An examination of that plan of government adopted by our revolutionary fathers, the very first year after the war terminated, will show what they considered to be the inherent rights of the people of the new States as well as the rights of the people of the original states.
            a. In the plan of government as adopted by the Congress of the Confederation you will find that it was provided that the people on the public lands might assemble and choose for themselves the constitutional laws of any one of the original states for their government until they had twenty thousand inhabitants.

b. When they attained that number they were authorized to call a convention, form a common constitution, and State government, and live under that without a representation in Congress, until they had a population equal to the smallest State of the Union.

c. But during the whole of that period they were to have all the rights of freedom and sovereignty over their local and demestic affairs, the same as the other States, the only difference being that the old State had a representation in Congress on foreign and federal questions, while these new States or territories as we now call them only had a delegate who had the right to speak but not to vote.

2. Thus you will find this Territorial question stood when the convention assembled to frame the constitution of the United States, and that not only before the revolutionary war, but during the war and up to the very day the constitution was adopted, our fathers recognized the right of the people of the Territories as well as the States, to form their own institutions and make their own laws just as they pleased so long as they did not interfere with the federal powers placed in Congress.

B. All that I contend for now is that the people of the American territories are entitled to the same rights which our fathers claimed for the British colonies before the revolution, and if it be true that the American citizens living under the constitution in our Territories are not entitled to as many rights and privileges as they were before the revolution took place, what have we gained by the revolution?

V. [Refutation] But I am told that the people of a territory have no rights except those which Congress delegates to them.

A. We are informed that a territory is the creature of Congress, consequently the creature cannot have more rights than the creator, and inasmuch as Congress cannot regulate the affairs of parent and child, husband and wife, guardian and ward, master and servant, therefore the people of the territories cannot do it.

B. That was the precise argument which was used during the revolutionary war against our fathers.

1. They were told that the people of the colonies possessed no rights except those which were granted them by the King of England, and as the colonies derived all their rights from the king they could be taken away at the wish of the king.

2. But thank God there arose men in the bosom of Old Virginia—your Henrys, your Jeffersons, your Lees, and hosts of other brilliant patriots—who asserted that the people of the colonies did not derive their rights from the king and hence the king could not take them away.

a. Our fathers said in justification of the revolution that the people of the colonies derived their rights from God Almighty and there was no power on earth that could lawfully and justly deprive them of them.

b. They declared that the people of the colonies had the inherent right of self-government in all things relating to their local and domestic concerns of their own right and not as derived from the British government.

C. But we are told that the Territories are not sovereign and, therefore, have not the right of local self-government.
    1. Let me ask whether the American colonies were sovereign powers when they asserted this same right to govern themselves?
        a. Our fathers were asserting and defending the right not of Sovereign States, but the right of dependent colonies, dependent Territories, dependent provinces to exercise this inherent right of self-government while they remained in a colonial condition.
        b. You cannot justify the American revolution except on the ground that the right of self-government was a just claim founded in eternal truth, and hence, the British government had no right to take it away.
    2. Now, I ask you who claims more than this for the people of the Territories? I claim no rights for the people of the American territories which our fathers did not demand and obtain at the point of the bayonet from the British government for British colonies.

In this application of popular-sovereignty principles is found Douglas' answer to Lincoln's Cooper Institute address of February 27, 1860. Lincoln, it will be remembered, used the Northwest Ordinance of 1787 as partial documentary proof of his theory that the Founding Fathers looked toward the eventual abolition of slavery in the territories. But Douglas denied at Norfolk that slavery could be legislated out of existence. He knew that Illinois, when a territory, actually introduced slavery in spite of the Northwest Ordinance, but abandoned it upon finding that the climate made it unprofitable. "Hence this question of slavery does not depend at all upon the laws of Congress or Territorial laws as to where it will go. It is a question of political economy, a question of self interest to be determined by the climate, by the degree of latitude, the altitude above the sea and the interests of the people occupying this territory."

On the other hand, both Lincoln and Breckinridge supported the widespread belief that slavery could be controlled by the federal government; Lincoln favored its exclusion in the territories and Breckinridge its inclusion. Douglas saw the inevitable clash between these positions and sought to avoid the dilemma by developing a formula to take the strife out of Congress. He believed that merely putting a law on the books was not sufficient; workability was the test. Douglas had held this position for many years.[9] A law is a consensus of opinion and only as good as the desire to enforce it. The clauses in the Constitution on slavery, as interpreted by the Supreme Court, did not conform to the facts of slavery as Douglas saw them. Geography, climate, local sentiment were more powerful than decrees of Congress. Some thoughtful men in both North and South acknowledged the reasonableness of Douglas' position and made it possible for him to expound his doctrine, although he had vainly urged nonintervention as a plank in the party platform of 1860.

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[9] Albert J. Beveridge (*Abraham Lincoln, 1809–1858* [Boston, 1928], II, 110) suggests that Douglas had the answer to the question of slavery extension. "Thus in 1850 Douglas announced the truth that friendly legislation and local favor were indispensable to the existence of slavery in a Territory or anywhere else, and made an unanswerable argument for that principle. Yet eight years later Lincoln was to ask Douglas whether he favored this very principle, a question which within the last forty years has been made to appear the manifestation of superhuman foresight. . . . The truth was, Douglas insisted, that slavery could not possibly exist in any territory whatever that had been

Douglas, the noninterventionist, after his demonstration of loyalty to the party in the 1852 and 1856 campaigns—waged on nonintervention—expected, and with reason, the nomination in 1860. But Southerners by that time had lost faith in nonintervention because it had not turned out to their benefit. Moreover, sentiment had crystallized against Douglas because of his break with Buchanan over Kansas and because of his Freeport heresy. Many Southerners condemned him for the Kansas-Nebraska Act.[10] In contrast to his rejection for these reasons by the politicians at Charleston, he must have been encouraged by the popular reception on his first southern speaking tour. An account of his address at Richmond, Virginia, as it appeared in *The New York Times* for September 1, indicates that he spoke to large assemblies. "Tonight (August 31) he addressed 15,000 people in the Capitol grounds from the stand erected beside the Washington monument. His reception here is said to have rivaled the celebrated demonstration when Henry Clay entered Richmond. He was very hoarse and seemed to suffer much in speaking tonight. The Richmond Douglas stock rates the highest, and is still advancing. Every indication proves that in Virginia the fight is between him and Bell."

On his homeward journey Douglas spoke on September 6 at Baltimore, repeating his Norfolk arguments. On the 7th he was at Harrisburg and on the afternoon of the 8th at Reading. That evening he was in Philadelphia, against the wishes of many in the National Democratic party. The political outlook in Pennsylvania was anything but encouraging for the Democrats, split as they were into three factions. In Baltimore Douglas had received a letter from one Richard Vaux[11] imploring him not to come to Philadelphia to speak because of the lack of spirit among the National Democrats, who had taken the position that they should elect local officials and disregard the national ticket, which was proving a liability. More ominous was a great Republican rally in Philadelphia on the night Douglas was scheduled to speak.

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acquired from Mexico. So the whole controversy over slavery was academic,—or was it a series of manoeuvres by politicians for partisan purposes? shrewdly asked Douglas. Northern and Southern radicals would strive to keep up the agitation, but their effort would avail nothing. The people would not gratify politicians whose real object was to 'organize parties along geographical lines.' "

[10] Avery O. Craven, *The Repressible Conflict* (Baton Rouge, 1939), p. 4.

[11] Douglas Letters.

Thus in Philadelphia, after the encouragement of his first trip south, Douglas met head on with Breckinridge, Bell, and a Republican party now sure of victory in the November elections. In Pennsylvania the Republicans had made the tariff the chief issue; they soft-pedaled the Negro question.[12] Protectionism and the split in the Democratic party appeared to be deciding factors in Pennsylvania, and worried Democrats approached Douglas at Easton with a proposal for last-minute fusion. "For one, I can never fuse," he replied, "and never will fuse with a man who tells me that the Democratic creed is dogma, contrary to reason and the Constitution . . . I have fought twenty-seven pitched battles, since I entered public life, and never yet traded with nominations or surrendered to treachery."[13]

Maine and Vermont, in spite of Douglas' efforts, had elected Republican governors early in September, and the prospects in Pennsylvania now seemed no better. A less resolute man than Stephen A. Douglas might have retired at this juncture of the campaign, advising his followers to join Bell, who did stand for union. His persistence, however, puzzled seasoned political writers like Henry J. Raymond, who declared editorially in *The New York Times,* September 13, "Douglas either must have lost his craft as a politician or be credited with steadfast convictions."

Only steadfast convictions could have carried Douglas at a killing pace through his Pennsylvania, Ohio, Indiana, and Illinois schedule. He continued appointments in the Northwest until the time of the election. Then at Cedar Rapids, October 8, he received a dispatch from his devoted friend John W. Forney, of the Philadelphia *Press*, announcing the results of the Pennsylvania elections, and another reporting the election of a Republican governor in Indiana. Douglas turned to his secretary, James B. Sheridan, and said, "Mr. Lincoln is the next President. We must try to save the Union. I will go South."[14]

Starting in Illinois, Douglas campaigned in Missouri, Tennessee, Georgia, and Alabama on his second southern tour, and responded loyally to invitations he had been receiving from his southern friends. Louis DuFau, chairman of the Louisiana State Central Committee, John Forsythe of the Mobile *Register*, John J. Seibles, editor of the Montgomery *Confederation*, and many others, had begged Douglas to travel through their states.[15] Seibles in a letter of August 14, was urgent:

[12] Reinhard H. Luthin, *The First Lincoln Campaign* (Cambridge, Mass., 1944), p. 208.

[13] *The New York Times,* Sept. 10, 1860.

[14] Henry Wilson, *History of the Rise and Fall of the Slave Power in America* (New York, 1874), II, 699; Horace Greeley, *The American Conflict* (Hartford, 1864–1866), I, 159. The early state elections had not been favorable to the Republicans, winning in New Hampshire, but losing in Rhode Island and Connecticut. Early in September, however, Maine elected a Republican governor, and Vermont, Pennsylvania, and Indiana did likewise. It was then apparent that only a miracle could defeat Lincoln and Hamlin. See Luthin, Ch. XII.

[15] Douglas Letters.

> The recent elections have produced almost a revolution in parties at the South. From what almost everyone considered the strongest ticket at the South, has become the weakest in the race. Breckinridge will not now carry one half dozen states in the South, his supporters are overwhelmed with dismay at these recent disasters especially in L'rentz and know not what to expect. They are panic stricken and broken and we are now gathering up all our forces to make a vigorous charge upon their routed columns. In this you can aid us immensely and it is by passing through our state (as well as the South generally) and responding to their serenades of your friends. We want you to come by all manner of means; stop at three places—Montgomery, Selma, and Mobile. Deputations of great numbers would come out to hear you from every county in the state and it would be the means of getting together the largest number of people that has been seen in Alabama. Men would listen to you. The converted, that could not be induced to read a speech or hear an argument in your defense would spread it through the country for union prejudice and clamor would give way before it.

In spite of threats of personal violence the candidate headed South with Mrs. Douglas and his secretary. Acting on the advice and invitation of friends the following itinerary was drawn up: October 18, Springfield, Ill.; 20, St. Louis, Mo.; 22, Centralia; 24, Memphis, Tenn.; 25, Huntsville, Ala.; 26, Nashville, Tenn.; 27, Chattanooga; 29, Kingston, Ga.; 30, Atlanta; 31, Macon; November 2, Columbus; 2, Montgomery, Ala.; 3, Selma; 5, Mobile.[16]

The terrific pace was telling on the "Little Giant." Reporters wrote that the silvery voice and the agile tongue lost their power by overexertion. "His voice," a Springfield reporter wrote, "is merely a bark and a yelp from the commencement of his speech so that it is painful to listen to him. His harangue is cut up into spasmodic articulation of two or three words each—in this style—'I was opposed to—the Missouri Compromise—upon principle—but as the people—of the country—had seemed to acquiesce in it—with entire unanimity—I was unwilling—to disturb—the peace of the country—by any interference with it.' "[17]

Added to the normal campaign strain were the violent partisan clashes, especially between Breckinridge and Douglas men in the southern cities. When the "Brecks" left their clubrooms in St. Louis on October 19, for example, they had a physical collision with the Douglas men.[18] Partisanship again flared at Nashville on October 26 when, not by design, the paths of Douglas and Yancey crossed. Douglas was scheduled to speak in the forenoon on the courthouse grounds. The train from Louisville bearing Yancey was due to arrive in time for the Douglas speech. The friends of Yancey, anxious to preserve the dignity of the occasion, decided to forego a public reception for him, since in a small city it might be expected to interrupt measurably the proceedings at the Douglas meeting. Nevertheless, the excitement created by Yancey's arrival was wildly enthusiastic, and a portion of the crowd endeavored to unhitch the horses and themselves draw Yancey's carriage through the streets. They were prevented only by the Alabaman's firm refusal. At the Sewanee House, however, he was compelled to appear on the balcony and bow his acknowledgments of the continuous cheering.

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[16] Huntsville *Southern Advocate*, Oct. 25, 1860.

[17] Springfield *Daily Illinois State Journal*, Oct. 20, 1860.

[18] New York *Daily Tribune*, Oct. 31, 1860.

Decorum was still difficult to maintain that evening, for Senator Henry S. Foote, a Douglas partisan, was to speak at a rally at the courthouse grounds after Yancey had concluded his speech at the state house grounds. The Douglas followers repeated the cry time and again during the Yancey meeting, "To the Court House to hear Foote!" Yells, hisses, and groans filled the air. Yancey expressed his regret that he had not been informed of Douglas' appointment in the city on that day; he knew nothing of the Senator's presence in Nashville until he himself left the cars that morning.[19]

Two days before the Nashville encounter with Yancey Douglas had spoken in Memphis. His visit was reported in the Memphis *Daily Appeal*, a pro-Douglas organ, on October 25. In the Memphis *Daily Avalanche*, a pro-Breckinridge paper, half the speech was run on the twenty-fifth and half on the twenty-sixth. The two accounts provide an interesting study of the treatment accorded Douglas by friendly and unfriendly papers. The *Appeal* could not find enough words of praise to heap upon Douglas and his cause while the *Avalanche* poured ridicule and contempt upon the gathering. Their partisanship even colored estimates of the crowd: the *Appeal* reported 30,000 people, where the *Avalanche* acknowledged only 5000.

After a brief but appropriate salutation to Chairman Linton Stephens (brother of Alexander H. Stephens), Douglas began with the statement he had appended to his Virginia addresses, and originally evoked from him by the Breckinridge heckler: "I do not come to solicit your suffrages but to make an appeal in behalf of this glorious union by an exposition of those principles, which, in my opinion, can only preserve the peace of the country."[20] Pleading for the Union came first, late in October. The statesman in Douglas superseded the politician.

The arguments used in all of the speeches in the campaign appeared again at Memphis; they may be put into five categories:

1. The doctrine of nonintervention—history of nonintervention; Freeport Doctrine; Dred Scott Decision; Kansas-Nebraska Bill.
2. The Democratic party and nonintervention in 1852, 1856, 1860.
3. Douglas and his political enemies—Buchanan, Breckinridge.

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[19] DuBose, p. 527.

[20] Douglas said the same thing in Atlanta (Oct. 20): "I come before you today, not for the purpose of soliciting your votes, but for the purpose of vindicating those principles of government upon which I believe" (Augusta *Daily Constitutionalist*, Oct. 25); in Huntsville, Oct. 25: "I come not to solicit your votes" (Huntsville *Southern Advocate*, Oct. 31); in Mobile, Nov. 5: "I arrive before you in pursuance of the invitation of Democratic friends, not to ask your suffrages" (Montgomery *Confederation*, Nov. 16, 1860).

4. Congressional control of slavery—history; implications.
5. The Union and the Constitution—the inevitability of Lincoln's election; implications.

While Douglas' speeches now featured a strong appeal to uphold the Constitution and the Union, even though Lincoln were elected, he also continued his exposition of the nonintervention doctrine. But this argument lost its effectiveness when the political leaders of the South abandoned the Douglas position. "With the exception of Alexander H. Stephens," the September 3 New York *Daily Tribune* declared, "Mr. Douglas had few leaders of the Southern Democracy with him. Hunter, Mason, Breckinridge, Cobb, Hammond, Davis, Green, Bayard, Slidell, Orr regard him as a traitor to Democratic principles." Though his hearers may have become hostile on this point, Douglas extolled the doctrine as the only basis on which the North and the South could live peacefully together. In Memphis, for example, Douglas pointed out that Howell Cobb of Georgia had told the people of Westchester, Pennsylvania, in the campaign of 1856, that nonaction by a territorial legislature was equivalent to the exclusion of slavery. Had not President Buchanan made Cobb Secretary of the Treasury for uttering this doctrine? Indeed, Douglas said, "In that speech Mr. Cobb advocated not only the doctrine that slavery, the question, was to be banished from the halls of Congress forever, and referred to the people of the Territories to decide for themselves, but he went further and told us what he thought on the law point. He said that the people of a Territory could either exclude slavery by non-action or by unfriendly legislation. (A voice, 'Go it Douglas') And I borrowed the idea from Cobb in my Freeport speech. (Applause and a voice, 'The greatest man in the world.')"[21]

From Memphis Douglas traveled through northern Alabama, where sentiment was radically divided. Douglas had many friends in the region. On the clash between intervention and nonintervention at Charleston thirty-six of the Alabama delegation obeyed instructions and withdrew from the convention when it refused to incorporate the principles of the Dred Scott decision in the party platform,[22] and on this issue they had opposed Douglas. With the return of the delegates from Charleston, the break between the Democrats of northern and southern Alabama gradually widened.[23] The withdrawal of the delegates was approved by the people of the four congressional districts of southern Alabama who later sent seventeen of their twenty-four delegates to the anti-Douglas convention at Richmond, while the people of northern Alabama sent only three of their twelve delegates. Southern Alabama, under Yancey's leadership, and in the absence of compromise forces,[24] became more and more unified for secession. But in northern Alabama Douglas had a friendly press[25] and he was greeted by large outpourings of people. The Huntsville *Southern Advocate* on October 31 reported that from ten to fifteen thousand people attended his meeting. "Four hundred people from Marshall county went to Huntsville to hear him, traveling on horseback, on wagons, or on foot. Many of them arrived the day before Douglas reached there." Perhaps typical of unionist sentiments in this region was a letter from D. C. Humphries of Huntsville:

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[21] Memphis *Daily Appeal*, Oct. 25, 1860.

[22] "South Carolina, Mississippi, Louisiana, Texas and Arkansas endorsed the Alabama platform and rallying behind Yancey went to the Charleston convention determined to force the issue to a conclusion" (Dwight L. Dumond, *The Secession Movement, 1860–1861* [New York, 1931], pp. 35–36).

[23] Lewy Dorman, *Party Politics in Alabama from 1850 through 1860* (Montgomery, 1935), p. 157.

> I have read your triumphant speech at Atlanta and the eloquent introductory address of Mr. Stephens. We may be defeated in your election to the presidency, but whether you are chosen or not the agitating question can be settled—on no other principle than the one you propose—nonintervention by Congress. You have done your duty to your country, our common country, and you have the consolation of feeling and knowing that your reputation is held dear by an immense multitude of your country men! We have won a great moral victory in Alabama.[26]

After Douglas had appeared at Atlanta on October 30 his train passed through Barnesville, where he was serenaded by the brass band of the village. About two hundred persons gathered to see the "Little Giant." There was, according to the report, only *one* Douglas man in the crowd, but the "Bell-Everetts" made the welkin ring with enthusiastic cheers for the little "Squatter Sovereign." This turnout of Bell-Everett sympathizers was one of the first evidences of the effect of the argument that a vote for Bell was a vote for Douglas, for union and against secession.

Macon turned out an estimated crowd of ten thousand to hear Douglas on October 31 in another Bell-Everett demonstration. Alexander H. Stephens introduced the speaker.

> Douglas began by paying another high compliment to the distinguished ability and patriotism of Mr. Stephens, and endorsed all he had uttered. We noted no new point in Judge Douglas' speech. His explanation and defense of his Popular Sovereignty theory was the same in substance and language as that in the Petersburgh speech. The attack upon the Brecks and Secessionists can be found in the Jones' Woods speech. The Norfolk speech on Unionism was reproduced with the addendum of an argument against secession as a "Constitutional Right." The distinction between "squatter" and "popular sovereignty" was drawn at Rochester;

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[24] Emmett John Holland, "Union Sentiment in Georgia and Alabama from 1850 to Secession: The Struggle of the Conservatives to Prevent Radical Action," unpub. thesis (Univ. of Chicago, 1936).

[25] According to the Camden *Register* (July 14, 1860) in an incomplete list, nine newspapers in Alabama were pro-Douglas: Mobile *Register*, Gainesville *Independent*, Greensboro *Beacon*, Huntsville *Advocate*, Athens *Herald*, Troy *Advertiser*, Dadeville *Banner*, Selma *Sentinel*, Montgomery *Confederation*.

[26] Humphries to Douglas, Nov. 3, 1860 (Douglas Letters).

> and, in fact, from beginning to end there was nothing new (as there could not well have been) unless we except some complimentary remarks to Georgia, and something about his personal feelings in regard to the sectional controversy, which he stated were those of perfect impartiality. It was a plain, forceful speech—thoroughly national in spirit—and received with a good deal of enthusiasm by his friends and the Bell men, and with entire courtesy by the friends of Breckinridge. We are glad to say everything passed off pleasantly. The most enthusiastic Douglas man could not have hoped for a larger crowd, a fairer hearing, or more perfect respect for their favorite. On the other hand, we believe no vote has been changed nor do we suppose it to be the object of the Judge so much to change votes as to combat the prepossessions against himself. He had every opportunity in Macon.[27]

After speaking at Columbus the next day Douglas invaded hostile central Alabama with an address at Montgomery on November 2; at last he was coming to grips with those who defeated his nomination at Charleston. Tartly, though perhaps not tactfully, he began by accusing Alabamans of deserting the principle of nonintervention:

> After the Convention adjourned at Charleston and before it reassembled at Baltimore in the present year, I made a speech in the Senate in reply to Jefferson Davis and others, in which I offered the Alabama platform of 1856 as a basis of compromise and reconciliation. I did not ask at Charleston or at Baltimore for any other or different platform than that which Alabama had prescribed at Cincinnati—when Mr. Breckinridge was nominated. (Cheers) James Buchanan and John C. Breckinridge were nominated and elected on the platform of non-intervention. They never could have been elected on any other platform. (Applause) The Cincinnati platform was adopted by the unanimous vote of the delegates from every state in the Union. There was not one vote against it from one State. It declared in so many words that this Union could only be preserved on the basis of non-intervention by Congress with slavery in the States or in the territories. (Cheers) When the Democratic party assembled at Charleston this year to nominate a candidate for the Presidency, the Northern Democracy came forward and asked that the Cincinnati platform might be re-affirmed in the precise words in which it stood, and had been adopted by Alabama; (laughter) but we were met by the delegation of your State, who told us that if we stood where Alabama stood four years ago, Alabama would bolt, (laughter and cheers) telling us that the platform which Alabama adopted in 1856 was so rotten in 1860 than an honest man could not stand upon it. (Laughter and applause) Is it true that Democratic principles become rotten so quick? ("No") Men may get rotten but principles are eternal. (Cheers)

If it was too late to redeem the Democracy it was not too soon to affirm the Union, and the senator warned his listeners against the conspiracy to split the nation. He reiterated his Norfolk views on Lincoln, union, and secession:

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[27] Macon *Daily Telegraph*, Nov. 1, 1860; see also J. O. Butler, *Historical Record of Macon and Central Georgia* (Macon, 1879).

> I believe there is a conspiracy on foot to break up this Union. It is the duty of every good citizen to frustrate the scheme. If Lincoln is elected, he owes it to the Breckinridge men, and they tell us, after having tried to secure that result by dividing the party, that if he is elected they are going to dissolve the Union. At Norfolk, Va., they wanted to know whether, if Lincoln were elected, I would help them dissolve the Union. I told them never on earth. (Cheers)
>
> There is no living man who would do more to defeat Lincoln than myself. There is no man more anxious to defeat him than myself. And I would have no trouble in beating him to death, but for the support given him by the Breckinridge men. If Lincoln is elected, he must be inaugurated. And after he is inaugurated, if he attempts to violate any man's rights, or the Constitution of the country, we will punish him according to the Constitution, to the extent of the law. Notwithstanding the combination between the Breckinridge men and the Black Republicans of the North, we have already succeeded in insuring enough Douglas Democrats, united with the South, to outvote the Black Republicans. We shall hold both Houses of Congress against him during his term, if he should be elected.
>
> I hold that the election of any man on earth by the American people, according to the Constitution, is no justification for breaking up this government.[28]

Without waiting to hear Yancey's reply that evening, Douglas took the night boat to Selma for a speech the next day. His campaign was coming to a close. On the afternoon of November 5 he stepped off the steamer "Duke" and onto the wharf at Mobile. A throng of men and women awaited him and he was officially welcomed by ex-Governor John Winston, whose friendship dated back to 1848 when Douglas campaigned in Alabama for Cass. Douglas expressed his feelings of appreciation to the crowd, was escorted to the Battle House, and there again briefly addressed the assemblage. At 8:00 P.M. he was introduced from the steps of the courthouse by John Forsythe, editor of the Mobile *Register*. Douglas spoke for two hours to an audience of between five and ten thousand, essentially repeating his arguments at Montgomery.[29] This speech marked the end of Douglas' tour of the South. He ended as he had begun, affirming his doctrine of nonintervention, but pleading with the Alabamans to believe that they would have more security within than without the Union.[30]

Douglas remained in Mobile a few days to hear the election returns, and then went on to New Orleans.[31] There, on the eighth, he was given a rousing reception and banners proclaimed him the candidate for 1864. But he did not forget the business of the hour. "Let us lay aside all partisan feelings and act as become patriots and lovers of our country," he implored his well-wishers.

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[28] David R. Barbee and Milledge L. Bonham, Jr., "The Montgomery Address of Stephen A. Douglas," *Jour. of Southern History,* V (1939), 527–552.

[29] Mobile *Daily Advertiser,* Nov. 6, 1860.

[30] Selma *Alabama State Sentinel,* Nov. 7, 1860.

[31] Mobile *Daily Advertiser,* Nov. 6, 1860.

> Let us put ourselves to work to rescue the government of the country from the hands of those whom we think unworthy to administer it. If Abraham Lincoln is president what harm can he do? (None) There is a majority in the House of Representatives. He is powerless for mischief—all he can do is to fill the offices, and the majority in the Senate will reject those he nominates if they are not good men. (Cheers) He will be an object of commiseration and pity rather than fear. (Cheers) Then why should we break up the best government that the sun in its course around the earth ever shone upon, merely because we have been defeated in a Presidential election? (Cheers) Let us rather rally with renewed energy and dauntless courage to the performance of our duties, and rescue the country from those hands in which it should not have been placed.[32]

Was Douglas successful in his original strategy of demonstrating at the ballot box that the South was not unified for secession? Was not the combined vote for Douglas and Bell sufficient to prevent Breckinridge from claiming that he had a mandate to take the South out of the Union and seize the Capitol? Douglas received 163,525 votes, Bell, 515,973, or a total of 679,498 against 570,871 for Breckinridge. The difference between Breckinridge and Bell was less than 60,000, indicating that Bell received almost all the support of the former Whig party. The total southern vote for the three candidates opposed to Breckinridge was 795,928, or a majority of 134,877 with unionist sympathies.[33] It is evident that on election day the masses of the South were not wholly secessionist.

Observers in the South confirmed this interpretation of the balloting. *The New York Times*, on November 7, declared, "We regard the result in Virginia, Kentucky and Tennessee as having substantially dispelled all danger of disunion which the elections of Lincoln were supposed to involve." Its dispatches from Richmond (November 9), Norfolk (November 10), Petersburgh (November 12), all pointed out that secession sentiment was fast losing ground. Herschel V. Johnson, Douglas' running mate, wrote encouragingly from Georgia, November 25: "There is a strong reaction going on in your favor here. Do not check it. Make a speech that will make the whole South sorry they did not vote for you. They are beginning to feel that way already."[34] A Breckinridge paper in Kentucky reflected post-election sentiment in the border states in language that echoed Douglas' speeches:

> We therefore counsel acquiescence in Lincoln's election or rather in the recent verdict of the People, upon the distinct and unequivocal expression of strong hope, if not belief, that no real attempt will be made to carry out the measures avowed by his party. If we believed that the Federal Administration would and could now be used to carry out the aggressions of fanaticism against slavery our voice would now be for resistance. But we cling yet to a hope for Union. . . .

[32] *The New York Times*, Nov. 15, 1860.

[33] See Greeley, I, 328; French Ensor Chadwick, *Causes of the Civil War* (New York, 1906), p. 132.

[34] Douglas Letters.

> We are neither submissionists nor Secessionists. We stand by the constitution and advise no submission to its violation. Lincoln's election per se is not an infraction of any provision of the Constitution, and we submit, his attempt to carry out the avowed purposes of his party to use the Federal authority on the side of free labor, in the irrepressible conflict, would be a violation of the Constitution, and when that is proposed we are for resistance to the death.[35]

In summing up the effects of Douglas' southern campaign, Johnson's letter sounded a prophetic note: "On the whole I think you made a magnificent race; and though defeated you have nothing for which to reproach yourself. You have failed in a noble struggle for principle—but to rise again."[36]

Undoubtedly Herschel Johnson reflected the hopes of thousands of voters, North and South, for Douglas' future in the Democratic party. Yet in a few months, on June 3, at the age of forty-eight, death ended the efforts of the "Little Giant" on behalf of the Union. In the century since there has been a harvest of honor and respect for Stephen Arnold Douglas and a place next to Abraham Lincoln, while the names of John C. Breckinridge, John Bell, and William L. Yancey are almost forgotten.[37]

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[35] Lexington *Kentucky Statesman*, Nov. 13, 1860.

[36] Herschel V. Johnson to Douglas, Nov. 25, 1860 (Douglas Letters).

[37] This revisionist view of Douglas is symbolized by the use of *his* picture as the frontispiece for two major works on *Lincoln:* Albert J. Beveridge, *Abraham Lincoln, 1809–1858* (New York, 1928), and Allan Nevins, *The Emergence of Lincoln* (New York, 1950).

Carl Schurz's Republican Jubilation Speech, November 16, 1860

DUANE E. TUCKER

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Albany Hall in Milwaukee had just been painted and papered. A local journalist proclaimed it "as fine looking a concert hall as there is in the country." In the same issue of the paper the publisher announced the availability to the public of a lithograph of Carl Schurz, who was to speak the next night, November 16, 1860, at a Republican jubilation meeting in this refurbished auditorium.[1]

In 1856 Schurz had scarcely been heard of in his adopted state of Wisconsin when State Senator L. P. Harvey asked him to help win the German population in the Republican campaign. He had a limited reputation as an intelligent young German who had acquired a remarkable knowledge of governmental affairs and an enviable command of the English language. But during that campaign he spoke only in German because he lacked confidence in his use of English in public address.[2]

The next year Republican leaders sought a German-born citizen for their state ticket, hoping to match the Democracy's traditional appeal to German voters. Harvey wrote Schurz in July, 1857, that he might support him for lieutenant governor at the nominating convention the following September.[3]

Schurz attended the convention as a delegate from Watertown. When he was nominated, the general inquiry was, "Who the Devil is Carl Schurz?" His speech of acceptance reassured skeptical delegates. As he finished his "eloquent remarks, the convention rose as one man, and gave three thundering cheers for . . . Schurz."[4]

With his nomination and this successful speech Schurz's light began to shine. The Republican press told his colorful story: Inspired by a Bonn

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[1] Milwaukee *Daily Wisconsin,* Nov. 15, 1860. "The likeness is excellent, and the many admirers of Carl Schurz can not attest their appreciation of him in a better manner than by calling on Mr. Seifert and getting a copy of this engraving."

[2] Carl Schurz, *Reminiscences* (New York, 1906–1908), II, 67.

[3] Schurz MSS., Library of Congress, in Chester Easum, *The Americanization of Carl Schurz* (Chicago, 1929), p. 162.

[4] Milwaukee *Sentinel,* Sept. 5, 1857.

University professor, Gottfried Kinkel, to rebel against Prussian domination, he took part in the German revolutions of 1848–1849, was captured and held prisoner for a time, then escaped to France. Meanwhile, Kinkel had been captured and imprisoned near Berlin, and Schurz was implored by many mutual friends to effect his escape. With their financial support he succeeded in helping his former teacher flee to London. Finding Paris dangerous for an exile and London incompatible, Schurz emigrated to America to seek aid for the German revolutionists.

When the twenty-three-year-old Schurz and his bride, Margarethe, landed in New York in 1852, he knew no English and little about the United States. Already a serious student of European government and history (he had intended to become a history professor), he determined to learn all he could about America too. During the next four years he diligently studied the language, government, and society.

In 1856, when he felt prepared to enter actively into politics, he declared his sympathy with the Republican fight against slavery. He found in it an extension of his enthusiastic, idealistic fight against despotism in Europe.[5]

Within a month of his arrival in the United States he claimed to have found "only one shrill discord" in the republican form of government—slavery in the South.[6] This belief in the incompatibility of slavery with democratic government remained the basis of his attacks on that institution until the emancipation. Believing slavery to be at the heart of the North-South conflict, he wrote in 1858: "However much the economic condition of the country claims the attention of statesmen and the people, everything gives way before the overwhelming magnitude of the slavery question, and all efforts to cover it up with other things are futile."[7]

Throughout the 1858 and 1860 campaigns Schurz refined his early analysis of the "irrepressible conflict," presenting its essence in more and more effective form until he reached his finest expression of it on August 1, 1860, in the "Doom of Slavery" speech in St. Louis. In this speech he explained the basic incompatibility of southern institutions and principles with the national "democratic organization of society."

Thus Schurz attached himself, along with other young intellectual German-Americans, to the Republican party, although in a speech in celebration of Republican victories in Wisconsin in the election of 1858[8] he declared himself an independent party member. However, his independent spirit did not prevent him from performing valuable service to the Republican cause. During his campaign for lieutenant governor in 1857 he averaged five speeches a week in October, appearing sometimes alone, sometimes with Alexander Randall, candidate for governor, and with Senator L. P. Harvey. He used German when speaking on the same platform with them. When appearing alone he often spoke first in English, then in German.[9]

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[5] Easum, p. 139.

[6] Easum, pp. 61–62. Letter to Charlotte Voss from Philadelphia, Oct. 20, 1852, published in the original in Schurz, *Lebenserinnerungen von Carl Schurz* (Berlin, 1912), III, 100.

[7] Schurz to Kinkel, Feb. 15, 1858, Joseph Schafer, ed., *Intimate Letters of Carl Schurz* (Madison, 1928), p. 184.

[8] "Political Morals," Albany Hall, Milwaukee, Nov. 18, 1858 (Carl Schurz, *Speeches of Carl Schurz* [Philadelphia, 1865], pp. 38–50).

Although he was defeated in the election,[10] his influence continued to grow. A Watertown journalist called him "the ablest and most eloquent speaker either in German or English in the recent election."[11] The outstanding speech of the 1857 campaign was his English address in Madison, October 16. The Republican leader, Horace Rublee, editor of the *State Journal*, called this speech "eloquent, learned, and finished. A slight foreign accent, an occasional idiom, or the use of an unusual word, now and then, are the only evidences that he is not speaking his mother tongue, such is his perfect mastery of our language. . . ."[12] No longer did they ask in Wisconsin, "Who the Devil is Carl Schurz?" And after his analysis of "The Irrepressible Conflict" in Chicago, September 28, 1858, his national reputation as an orator and keen student of political affairs was made. The New York *Tribune* printed the address in full, calling it "certainly one of the ablest and clearest expositions yet made of the chief political questions to be settled in the coming elections."[13]

Wisconsin party leaders recognized Schurz as a man of commanding intellect and indefatigable energy. He rose phenomenally to political prominence, participating in inner party councils and answering calls to speak for Republican candidates during state campaigns. A delegate from Wisconsin to the Republican National Convention in Chicago, he led the Wisconsin contingent in a gradual shift from Seward to Lincoln for the presidential nomination. At first disappointed with Lincoln's nomination, he soon urged wholehearted support of his candidacy.[14] As a member of the Republican National Executive Committee he took charge of the "foreign department," and gained Lincoln's approval for his plan to organize squads of speakers and a system of correspondence among Germans, Scandinavians, and Dutch, confining himself mostly to the doubtful states–Indiana, Illinois, Pennsylvania, and New York.[15] He set out on his campaign thoroughly dedicated to the

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[9] Easum, 173. His German speeches were usually instructional, expounding Republican principles and opposition to slavery.

[10] Letter to Henry Meyer, Jan. 15, 1858 (Schafer, pp. 181–182). Defeated by a small number of votes, Schurz charged his loss to an election fraud which could have been proved only by some outlay of money.

[11] Watertown *Democrat*, Jan. 14, 1858.

[12] Madison *State Journal*, Oct. 17, 1857; see also Chas. W. Eliot's Memorial Address (pamphlet of the Wisconsin Hist. Society) delivered the year of Schurz's death, 1906. Eliot makes similar comments about Schurz's mastery of English.

[13] Easum, p. 221.

[14] Easum, p. 276.

[15] Frederic Bancroft, ed., *Speeches, Correspondence, and Political Papers of Carl Schurz* (New York, 1913), I, 118; Lincoln to Schurz, June 18, 1860 (Easum, p. 277).

Lincoln crusade. During July, the first month of his exhaustive four months' tour through the states with heavy German populations, he had an interview with Lincoln in Springfield. Escorted by Lincoln, Schurz made two speeches in the evening, one in German, the second in English. At the end of the latter address, Lincoln shook his hand and said, "You are an awful fellow. I understand your power, now."[16]

By this time he was recognized by the leaders of the Republican party as spokesman of the Germans in the Northwest. By some journalists and politically minded citizens across the country he soon came to be regarded as the outstanding speaker for the Republican cause. Andrew D. White was "especially aroused" by his arguments, which seemed to him "by far the best of that whole campaign—the broadest, the deepest, and the most convincing." An "eminent gentleman of Massachusetts" wrote a friend in Madison, Wisconsin, that Schurz's oratory was superior to Seward's. Speaking of the "Doom of Slavery" speech, he trumpeted: "[It] was a masterpiece of philosophical statesmanship. . . . Don't make him Governor of Wisconsin. His place is in the United States Senate."[17] The Republicans printed such speeches of Schurz in pamphlet form and distributed them by the hundreds of thousands.

In October Horace Rublee implored him to speak in Wisconsin. "No other man can do as much for the Republican cause at certain points as you," he wrote.[18] Returning to Wisconsin, Schurz was honored by one of the biggest party rallies of the Wisconsin campaign, October 24, "in acknowledgment of his services in Pennsylvania and elsewhere, for the Republican cause. (It) will be a formal welcome of the gifted German orator on his return home."[19] From then until the election he stumped the state, making last-minute appeals to German voters in the small towns, and concluding with minor and generally unreported speeches in Milwaukee.

Meanwhile the opposition attacked him vigorously. The extravagant praises of his oratory and statesmanship were matched by bitter denunciations in the Democratic press. An unsubstantiated statement in the Beaver Dam *Democrat* charged that he was paid by the Prussian government as a spy on his fellow exiles. Writers for the Milwaukee *News* and the *American* called him a rebel and a traitor to Germany. During the 1857 and 1860 campaigns in Milwaukee, "cabbages and other things were thrown at him" by Democrats, including Germans, who attended his speeches to jeer and heckle.[20] One opposition editor, however, admitted his skill as a public speaker: "Mr. Schurz is one of the most profound and most philosophical and powerful thinkers of the age; and he always gives utterance to his views in language remarkable for its clearness, its classical accuracy, and its eloquence."[21]

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[16] Letter to Mrs. Schurz from Alton, Ill., July 25, 1860 (Bancroft, I, 120).

[17] Andrew D. White, *Autobiography of Andrew Dickson White* (New York, 1907), I, 86–87; Milwaukee *Sentinel*, Aug. 30, 1860.

[18] Bancroft, I, 161*n*.

[19] Milwaukee *Evening Wisconsin*, Oct. 19, 1860.

[20] Memorial article with statements by acquaintances of Schurz', Henry Fink and Adam Kloes, Milwaukee *Sentinel*, May 15, 1906.

Thus Schurz received both praise and damnation for his work in the campaign for Lincoln and Republicanism. When the campaign was over and the results assessed, to some persons he was the man who made Lincoln president. It was the Germans who elected Lincoln, they reasoned, and Schurz was the leading campaigner among the Germans. Therefore he was responsible for the predominately Republican German vote.[22] This evaluation of his role was probably too generous. But in assaying his reputation among his supporters it is significant that they believed in this deep reach of his influence among his countrymen.

We turn now to Milwaukee, when Carl Schurz joined other Republicans in celebration of the Lincoln victory. Optimism marked the mood of Milwaukee Republicans on this occasion, November 16, 1860. The Milwaukee *Sentinel* of that day announced that Carl Schurz would address a mass meeting that night in Albany Hall, saying: "A rousing meeting may be expected. Let all be on hand."

Ten days earlier Milwaukee Republicans had held Douglas to a majority of only 901 votes over Lincoln. Four years earlier Buchanan had a majority of 3,267 votes over Frémont in this stronghold of the Democracy. Furthermore, voters in four of Milwaukee's nine wards favored Lincoln by slight margins—a considerable accomplishment in a city that had supported Democratic candidates in every previous presidential election "with sizeable majorities."[23]

Even more gratifying were the recent Republican victories in state elections. In 1859 Republicans had filled all state offices for the first time since the party was organized,[24] and on November 6, 1860, they delivered Lincoln a majority of over 20,000 votes. They were now confident of securing both houses of Congress within four years.[25]

Slavery had been a dominant issue in the campaign. Wisconsin leaders had for many years fought the introduction of slavery into the western territories. They wanted them to develop as free labor areas which would, with the building of a railroad from Wisconsin to Oregon, make Wisconsin the "Empire State" of the West. In addition the Republicans wanted new free states to strengthen the North's position in Congress, in the hope that the South's obstructionist tactics against internal improvements and a protective tariff could be halted by a Republican majority in Washington. One Milwaukee Republican candidate declared: "We must establish domestic manufactures in our midst. They are necessary to our prosperity. When we get a protective tariff, we can establish industrial employments, and not before. Then we can make it the city of the Northwest, and not before."[26]

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[21] Louisville *Journal*, in Milwaukee *Sentinel*, July 24, 1860; Easum, p. 292.

[22] Joseph Schafer, "Who Elected Lincoln?" *American Historical Rev.*, XLVII (1941), 51–63.

[23] Bayrd Still, *Milwaukee, The History of a City* (Madison, 1948), p. 133.

[24] A. M. Thomson, *A Political History of Wisconsin* (Milwaukee, 1902), p. 146.

[25] James R. Sellers, "James R. Doolittle," *Wisconsin Mag. of History*, XVII (1934), 293.

Also for economic reasons, Wisconsin leaders determinedly opposed secession. Commercial interests wanted to maintain free passage for their products on the Mississippi River, and when they finally became convinced of the possibility of secession, one editor declared that the Great West will have free passage on that river or go to war "with the Cotton States on the Lower Mississippi."[27] But at the time of Carl Schurz's jubilation speech the optimistic attitude of Milwaukee Republicans had not been greatly tempered by stories of radical secessionist sentiments from South Carolina and Georgia. The same editor who later threatened war with the South complacently prophesied that by March fourth "the Southern chivalry will have effervesced all their fury."[28]

Such were the chief issues which dominated the political thinking of those Republicans who met at Albany Hall to celebrate their victory. There was standing room only for Carl Schurz' jubilation speech. Reporting the event next day, November 17, Rufus King's *Sentinel* called it "one of the grandest demonstrations that Milwaukee ever witnessed. . . . Republicans turned out *en masse*, and numbers blocked up the stairway and sidewalks unable to gain admittance." Another report said, "The hall was packed full, and the enthusiasm was such as had pervaded the party all through the campaign."[29]

While the *Sentinel* carried a rather detailed account of the proceedings that night, neither it nor any other available journal reported who those Republicans were who packed the house to hear Schurz. Schurz ignored the occasion in his *Reminiscences*, and left no letters alluding to the audience, although he mentioned the meeting in a letter to his wife, speaking of his difficulty in composing a "stirring peroration" for the jubilation speech.[30]

But it is not likely that any German Democrats were present, for from the beginning of his residence in Watertown in 1855 Schurz failed to find popularity among them. They called him *ein verdamnte Republikaner*, and on occasion assaulted him with stage eggs.[31] From their earliest settlement in Wisconsin the Germans had found the recognition they wanted from the Democratic party.[32] They considered Schurz an apostate for daring to join the Republicans.

The 6000 Germans in Milwaukee (total population was 20,000 in 1860), helped the Democracy maintain its traditional supremacy in the presidential election of 1860, the three German-dominated wards giving Douglas some of his largest majorities in the city.[33] And out in the state five-sixths of the 124,000 Germans in Wisconsin voted for Douglas.[34]

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[26] Milwaukee *Evening Wisconsin*, Nov. 3, 1860.

[27] Milwaukee *Daily Wisconsin*, Jan. 18, 1861.

[28] Milwaukee *Daily Wisconsin*, Nov. 9, 1860.

[29] Milwaukee *Daily Wisconsin*, Nov. 17, 1860.

[30] Letter to Mrs. Schurz, Nov. 14, 1860 (Bancroft, I, 164).

[31] Dr. W. F. Whyte, personal acquaintance of Schurz' in Watertown, quoted by Fred L. Holmes, Milwaukee *Sentinel*, Sept. 11, 1921.

[32] Ernest Bruncken, "Political Activities of Wisconsin Germans, 1854–1860," *Proc. of the State Historical Society of Wisconsin* (Madison, 1902), pp. 47–50, 194.

Thus, with the exception of Schurz, the meeting was a native Republican show. Officiating were J. B. D. Cogswell, O. H. Waldo, the unsuccessful Republican candidate for mayor of Milwaukee in the recent election, and Alexander Randall, reelected governor of Wisconsin, who had won the nomination over Schurz. Waldo and Randall spoke briefly, followed by Secretary of State L. P. Harvey. Then a letter was read from Wisconsin's Senator James R. Doolittle, who voiced the same theme Schurz was about to develop in his speech.

After hearing Doolittle's letter the audience called for Carl Schurz. During his days of rest after the election Schurz had "sketched out the speech" and by now had probably had it printed.[35] His practice with important addresses was to write them out verbatim, revise them for the newspapers, and deliver the revised version in part or entirely from memory. No direct evidence is available regarding his delivery of the Albany Hall speech.

Schurz began by seeking the good will of his audience with commonplaces typical of the political victory speech. He thanked them for the honor with which they welcomed him back to Wisconsin. He indulged them in extravagant self-congratulation on the high-minded, honest, and courageous campaign the Republican party had conducted, "encouraged by the consciousness of right, and the invincible justice of our cause. . . ." In the phrase, "the invincible justice of our cause," and elsewhere in the introduction, were the first indications of his theme. His purpose was to persuade the audience that the election victory had guaranteed that democratic principles of human freedom would prevail in America, that the Union was now unassailable by whatever force the South might throw against it, and that civil war could best be averted by the Republican party making clear that the northern cause was invincible both morally and militarily.

Turning from party pleasantries, Schurz reminded his audience of the basic issues decided in the election: "The controversy has narrowed down to a simple alternative: Shall slavery be a national institution? Shall slavery be extended over the territories of the Union? Shall slavery rule the national policy of this Republic? The people have answered: It shall not! (Applause). Shall liberty be national and slavery local? Shall freedom prevail in the territories? The people have answered: They shall! (Cheers)." To climax these queries, he asked: "And finally, Shall the Union be preserved on the basis of the original principles on which it was founded? The people have answered in thunder tones: It shall and must be preserved! (Great applause)."

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[33] Unofficial returns in Milwaukee *Daily Wisconsin*, Nov. 7, 1860.

[34] Schafer, "Who Elected Lincoln?" pp. 51–63.

[35] Letter to Mrs. Schurz, Nov. 10, 1860 (Schafer, *Letters*, p. 232).

From this reawakening of enthusiasm for the issues, Schurz turned soberly to the responsibilities of the victors: "We have been wide-awake to the duties to be performed in the struggle; let us be wide-awake to the responsibilities devolving upon a victorious party . . . to make our victory fruitful of good results will require prudence united to consistency; firmness wedded to moderation. (Applause)." He asked the Republicans to "look at the situation of the Southern people calmly and without prejudice and passion. Our attitude," he claimed, "will have a decisive influence on their action."

Picturing the situation in the South "calmly and without passion," Schurz noted that appropriations were recommended for the purpose of arming the people, and resolutions were passed at mass meetings, declaring that Southerners would not submit to Mr. Lincoln's election. This rebellious activity, Schurz believed, was the natural result of "the sensational policy which was adopted by our opponents for the purpose of frightening the South, and, by the South, the North into the idea of abandoning the idea of electing a Republican President." By continuing this policy after the election, southern leaders had thrown their people

> into the most preposterous apprehensions for their own safety, indulging in extravagant designs most dangerous to their own interests, plotting treason against the government, upon which their only security and strength rests; preparing to exhaust the financial resources of their states, and to plunge into disorder and poverty for the sake of idle demonstrations, which will have no effect, and in adventurous enterprises which cannot but result in their own ruin. And all this in order to guard against aggressions which nobody intends to make. (Applause).

But Schurz next suggested that the southern rebelliousness might wear itself out as Southerners began to see clearly the hopelessness and irrationality of their cause. He predicted that "these dangers and difficulties will speedily disclose themselves as they go on with their inconsiderate undertaking." In a series of cause-effect arguments he listed a few of these difficulties; for example:

> The exclusion of Northern merchandise may look like a very formidable and efficient measure at first sight; but the people of the South will have the same wants as before, and it will turn out that they will have to buy where they can obtain their necessaries easiest and cheapest. (Applause). A general armament of the people may appear a very valiant and fine thing to those who are fond of military display; but nothing in the world is so well calculated to drain the financial resources of a State at a terribly rapid rate; and they will quickly find out, that their credit abroad will be in exact proportion to their resources at home, and the chances of their enterprise. (Laughter and cheers).

Schurz restated his belief that once reason had again subdued passion southern resistance would dissipate itself: "Difficulties like these will become apparent to every Southern man as soon as the first paroxysm is over."

In the first half of his speech Schurz offered a Republican's view of "the situation of the Southern people," a view that condemned their attitudes and activities as hostile and near-treasonable, while offering them understanding and forgiveness of their sins. At the same time he made it clear that the North, in its unity and strength, would brook no compromise, only renunciation of those sins. He presented a sort of explanation of the South's misguided reactions to the nomination and election of Lincoln, not a justification.

His fear that reason might not prevail in the South before the masses were led into "open treason" led him back in the second half of the speech to the theme that this outcome might be averted if the Republican party adopted the right attitude, "an attitude worthy of a people conscious of their strength and their righteous intentions, an attitude friendly, but not submissive, firm but not provoking."

Implying that the cause of the conflict was southern misjudgment of the North's beliefs and intentions, he told his audience what the Republicans should say to the southern people to correct their misconceptions. First, they should be told that their leaders "grossly deceived" them into believing that "the Republican party mean to invade the Southern States, to liberate the slaves by force of arms, to devastate your fields, to put the torch to your dwellings and to give up your wives and children to the mercy of our infuriated bondsmen." Had they been permitted to read Republican newspapers and hear Republican speakers they would have known that the party believed in "the constitutional right of the States, and will respect them as sacred and inviolable." Taking a theme from his earlier speeches he reaffirmed the Republican stand on slavery: "Where slavery exists by virtue of State legislation, there it exists upon the responsibility of the people of these States. There we claim no control over it." But, he said, "into territories now free, slavery shall not go. (Loud cheers)." He concluded this statement of Republican attitude by reiterating that the North had no aggressive designs on the South, that it was "superfluous to arm yourselves against an attack nobody intends to make."

Second, the southern people should be assured that if they intended to try to prevent the inauguration of Lincoln they would fail. Again Schurz revealed his belief that civil war might be avoided by a show of northern firmness and strength. He warned: "We feel strong, very strong; indefeasible in our right, inflexible in our purpose, invincible in our position and power." Lincoln would be inaugurated, he declared, and "no power on earth can prevent it. A compromise in this case is impossible . . ." Then, switching to a tone of understanding, he spoke to the southern people like a father to a headstrong son. ". . . do you deem it necessary to show us that you are a brave people? We know that and it needs no further proof. You are brave men when fighting for a good cause; but we think that Marion's sword, which won imperishable honors in fighting *for* our common country, would hardly preserve its lustre in a fight *against* it. (Great applause)."

In his last appeal to the people of the South he suggested how they could retreat from their rebellious activities without loss of pride. He recommended that they shift the burden of blame to their leaders, who deceived them about the North. Then he told them how to turn their error into a virtue: "To make a mistake is not a dishonorable thing in itself; but to persist in it after it has been discovered to be such, is a thing of questionable merit. (Applause). If to recede from a mistake requires any sacrifice of pride, it is the kind of pride which a true man will be proud to sacrifice. (Great applause)." He offered them sympathy, saying that the people should not suffer because "some politicians have compromised themselves." He offered them the reward of approbation by the North for their loyalty to the Union if they abandoned their "projects which are wrong in principle." Finally, he ended this sweet persuasion with a stern call to duty and reason: "But we do expect you to recognize the necessities of your situation, as every man of sense will do, and follow the dictates of loyalty and patriotism, which no man of honor can disregard. (Cheers)."

Schurz believed that this appeal to the Southerners would help lead them out of "the first paroxysm of a revolutionary movement" and back to a course of reason and loyalty. But he did not want the southern disunionists to interpret his analysis as a sign of northern complacency, irresolution, or weakness. He warned that "if it must be, we can rally hundreds of thousands of armed men at the tap of a drum and the people who glory in a conscientious exercise of their constitutional rights will be found eager to defend them. We would most sincerely deplore the necessity of civil war, but that necessity would not find us unprepared. The plotters of treason would do well not to mistake the repose of conscious strength for a lack of patriotic spirit. (Great applause)."

Turning his back on the disruptive controversy, Schurz concluded his address with a lofty and idealistic interpretation of the meaning of the Republican victory, borrowing some of the language from his "Irrepressible Conflict" speech of 1858: "The great experiment of self-government is not a failure. . . . The principles upon which alone a democratic system of government can permanently rest, are vindicated and maintained, and that is the meaning of the Republican victory. It is decreed that no interest, no power, can rule the destinies of this country which is incompatible with a free expression of public sentiment. (Great applause)." The recent victory encouraged Schurz to believe that the value of the Union lay not in the practical commercial advantages brought to it by the southern states. It lay in the fact that "the principles which constitute its vitality will, by their renewed and all-pervading strength, gradually harmonize all antagonisms, and draw even those communities which have so long resisted into the circle of their salutary influence, and induce the slaveholders to effect by their own voluntary action, that which, if they abandon their fortunes to the despotic tendency arising from their fondled institution, will be necessarily effected by disastrous convulsions." In conclusion he declared that the mission of the Republican party was "to maintain the principles upon which this government was founded, and I trust it will be able to maintain the government to which those principles have given birth. (Great and continued applause)."

The address was a blending of conciliation and militant, self-righteous, defiance. He offered the Southerners forgiveness without reprisal, but unyielding northern resistance to a continuation of their irrational belligerency.

This treatment of the crisis was more generous to the South than any other —except, perhaps, Lincoln's in his First Inaugural Address, to which this speech has been likened. While Schurz refused compromise (an attitude fed by his naive underestimation of the South's determination and strength), at least he did not demand recrimination. And while he received cheers for his bold defiance of southern threats, his speech was not a call to northern arms. Through frequent restatement he emphasized his conviction that the spirit in the South could be mollified by Republican assurances that northern aggressive designs were the fictional specters of radical imaginations. And if such assurances failed, the northern threat of mobilization would suffice to subdue the Southerners' revolutionary spirit.

In this address Schurz remained true to his reputation as a speaker of intellect with power to affect the feelings. It contained thoughtful inquiry into the meaning of events and explored the reactions of human beings caught up in them. And out of these examinations of human behavior in a crisis often came what may or may not be accepted as universal truths, as: "We do not ask of you any act of self-humiliation, for a ready acquiescence in the will of the majority will never deserve that name in a Republic like ours." But the history of the Civil War has indicated that Schurz's insights into the philosophy of democracy were truer than his insights into the motives of men. His interpretation of the meaning of the Union was more perceptive than his analysis of causes of southern rebellion and his assessment of the nature of the southern man.

One concludes that this was a thoughtful but not profound speech, given mostly to quick and easy generalizations that stimulated the mind without fatiguing it. It was well suited to a "jubilation meeting," a skillful mixture of political philosophy and practical politics, of lofty idea and partisan accusation, of sympathetic understanding and mild ridicule. The weight of its theoretical speculations was copiously lightened with vivid descriptions of the events that gave rise to them. In it Schurz mixed the language of the political philosopher with the language of the political orator. The following aspects of his style stand out: (1) use of a literate but not obscure vocabulary, frequently emotionalized with loaded words; (2) copiousness of diction interspersed with sparseness; (3) extensive use of parallelism and balanced sentence structure, the danger of monotony of its rhythm averted by skillful change to simple sentences, phrases, or clauses in a series, resulting in an ebb and flow of language which contributes to the emotional impact of the speech; (4) frequent use of antithesis; (5) restatement of dominant ideas; (6) continual use of categorical statements that suggest a quality of intellectual arrogance; (7) rather effective attempts at phrase-making. Coupled with this is a tinge of artificiality, of self-consciousness, suggesting the work of a rhetorician who has mastered the use of rhetorical figures but cannot conceal his mastery.

Whatever reservations of approval his audience may have held about his ideas, none were evidenced in the applause that followed his speech. The reporter for the *Sentinel* said next day that he "was saluted with a round of hearty cheers," while the same paper's full text used the phrase, "great and continued applause."[36] No other comments about the address appeared in this paper, but an editorial affirmed Schurz's no-compromise stand and threatened to meet secession with armed resistance. The editor of the *Daily Wisconsin* accompanied his printing of the text with a brief statement: "The speech of Carl Schurz was an admirable exposition of the principles and spirit of the Republican Party, and was perfectly adapted to the present crisis. It was a short but eloquent effort. . . ."[37] Apparently the address helped to sell newspapers, for on November 19 the paper carried the notice that long before dark the day after the jubilation meeting its second edition, containing the speech, was sold out. Its publishers reprinted the talk in a subsequent edition. Two other Wisconsin newspapers—the *State Journal* in Madison and the *City Courant* in Berlin—carried the text of the address without comment.

Whether Schurz's remarks in Albany Hall modified opinions or merely reinforced those already generally held by Wisconsin residents one cannot say. Nor does any evidence exist to indicate the reaction of the opposition to his ideas. But in line with Schurz's arguments many newspaper editors in Wisconsin expressed their aversion to any compromise of Republican principles. And citizens of three Wisconsin counties passed strong resolutions at a Ripon meeting on December 12 in favor of the Union, "the greatest danger to which . . . lies in the cowardice of Northern men."[38]

Most Wisconsin citizens apparently agreed with Schurz that the secessionist fire in the South could best be controlled by an attitude "friendly, but not submissive, firm but not provoking." They hoped that war could be avoided, but confidently expected to put a quick end to it should the Southerners be so foolish as to beat their drums.

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[36] Nov. 20, 1860.

[37] Nov. 17, 1860. The speech ran two and one-half columns.

[38] Berlin (Wis.) *City Courant*, Dec. 20, 1860.

Benjamin Morgan Palmer's Thanksgiving Sermon, 1860

WAYNE C. EUBANK

18

In the New Orleans of 1860 one spot long remembered by wayfarers was Lafayette Square. Fronting the square to the west was the Municipal Building, a masterpiece of Grecian architecture. Facing the square's south front was the First Presbyterian Church, one of the most magnificent and perfect types of Gothic architecture in America. Buttressed from foundation stone to its lofty pinnacle, almost 300 feet above the ground, the church was a landmark to all New Orleans. Located so near the heart of the city, it was within easy walking distance of most of the leading hotels. Built to house a growing congregation in a rapidly growing city, the main hall seated between 1800 and 2000 people.

New Orleans was not only the business center of the lower Mississippi Valley, but one of the important shipping cities of the world. Its population of more than 168,000 had increased some forty-five percent between 1850 and 1860. The season of 1859–1860 had witnessed the largest and most profitable river trade in New Orleans history. The city was swelled constantly with vacationers, agents, traders, and even those contemplating retirement in a center of culture. Large numbers of people from the "outside" found their way to the First Presbyterian Church on the Sabbath, and many a visitor was inclined to remain another Sunday in order to hear the "wonderful preacher." This outstanding minister, who in four years had won the admiration and respect of the Crescent City, was Benjamin Morgan Palmer.

Born in Charleston, South Carolina, June 25, 1818, Palmer received his early education at Walterboro Academy. Under the direction of the Reverend J. B. Van Dyke, a graduate of Amherst College and Princeton Seminary, he received thorough training in the normal curriculum of the day, including the art of public speaking and debating.

In the fall of 1832 Palmer enrolled at Amherst. It was not an appropriate time for Southerners to be seeking education in New England. Tariff grievances of long standing culminated in the South Carolina nullification, of which Palmer was soon aware. Years afterward, in his unpublished manuscript on Dr. Stuart Robinson, a classmate from the South, Palmer spoke his mind on the unhappy environment which surrounded him and his southern colleagues:

> A small group of Southern students nestled like birds in a nest, in that far-off New England clime. Five of the number hailed from Virginia, four from Georgia, and one poor speckled bird from South Carolina. . . . It was an uncanny time for Southern men to trim their sails for Northern seas. The nullification storm had just burst over the country, and was not yet appeased. The elements of conflict were gathering in the theological world, which a little later resulted in the schism rending the Presbyterian Church asunder.[1]

Because of his marked capacity for leadership, quickly demonstrated both in the classroom and on the campus, Palmer became the champion defender of the southern cause. This course gave rise to frequent verbal assaults. As he expressed it, "I was baited until I was as cross as a brown bear."[2] This constant irritation was an important factor in determining his course of action during his crisis with the faculty in the spring of 1834.[3]

Returning to South Carolina, Palmer spent the next two years tutoring and teaching in and around McPhersonville. He entered the University of Georgia in the fall of 1837 and less than a month after his arrival was initiated into the Phi Kappa Society.[4] He was graduated with first honors in the spring of 1838. Though his mastery of debate, together with his love for the platform, caused him to lean toward the legal profession, he decided upon the ministry and in the fall of 1838 entered Columbia Theological Seminary, Columbia, South Carolina.

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[1] Thomas Cary Johnson, *Life and Letters of Benjamin Morgan Palmer* (Richmond, 1906), pp. 47–48.

[2] Interview with four Martin sisters, Jan. 30, 1942.

[3] Palmer was a member of the Athenian Literary Society which pledged its members to secrecy on all happenings in their meetings. One practice of the Society was to have the Secretary read anonymous letters dropped into a box at the door of the meeting hall. On one occasion a paper was read which contained some caustic but humorous criticisms of the faculty. When Henry Ward Beecher, a student at Amherst and a member of the Athenian Society, informed the faculty of the incident, they took action to discover the author of the critical paper by attempting to force each member of the Society to declare his innocence. Palmer became the spokesman of the group which was indignant at being forced to breach the pledge of allegiance to the Society. On reminding the faculty that he was honor bound to take no part in disclosing the affairs of the Society, he was threatened with dismissal from the college. Palmer's reply was "I will take expulsion at your hands rather than trample upon my sense of honor." Because of his youth, display of ethics, and also perhaps because he stood at the head of his class scholastically, the faculty did not dismiss him; but owing to the irritation he had suffered at the hands of the critics of his state and section, and to his dislike for the spirit of the college, he soon determined to leave the institution and return to his own people. (Johnson, pp. 49–50); see also *Confederate Veteran* (Nashville, 1893–1902), X, 352.

[4] Phi Kappa Society Minutes, 1835–1854, Univ. of Georgia Library, p. 56. Of Palmer's excellence in the field of debate, Daniel Joseph Pope, his roommate said: ". . . the place in which I knew him best was the Phi Kappa Society. . . . He was himself wont to regard the training he derived in this Society as of the first importance to his subsequent career. Palmer was never absent, and always took part in debate. He was as fluent then as he ever became, as eloquent then as he ever became. I have never seen a youth of his age who could surpass him as a debater." (Johnson, pp. 58–59.)

Immediately after graduation in 1841 Palmer was called to the Presbyterian Church of Anderson, South Carolina, transferring a few months later to the First Presbyterian Church of Savannah, Georgia. So successful was his ministry at Savannah that within a year he was called to the First Presbyterian Church of Columbia, South Carolina, capital of the state, and home of Columbia Seminary and the college of South Carolina. When Palmer accepted this charge he was only twenty-five. Immediately preceding him as pastor had been two of his former Columbia Seminary teachers, the eminent Drs. George Howe and A. W. Leland, and the even more illustrious Dr. James Henry Thornwell. Thornwell was considered by many of his colleagues as the greatest scholar ever produced by the Presbyterian church.[5]

During his pastorate at Columbia Palmer received calls from churches in various sections of the country,[6] but refused all of these overtures. In the fall of 1854 he accepted the professorship of ecclesiastical history and polity at Columbia Seminary. Although his teaching in the seminary was of high caliber, he was soon convinced that the pulpit, not the classroom, was his sphere of greatest contribution. Accordingly, in the fall of 1856 he accepted a call from the First Presbyterian Church of New Orleans. His two years of exhaustive research in the fields of ecclesiastical history and polity while at Columbia had enhanced the wealth of information which for the next half-century was to lend itself to his fashioning in the pulpit. Thus, when Palmer departed from the region of his birth he was admirably equipped to become, as newspapers and colleagues so frequently called him, the "first citizen" of his adopted city, New Orleans.

On the national front, sectional rivalry increased steadily between 1830 and 1860. Abolitionists sought new issues to awaken moral fervor to serve their purposes. The southern attitude on lands, tariffs, internal improvements, and other national issues was considered effrontery by the free peoples of the North and Northwest. Many Northerners regarded the South as a land morally weak and economically unsound, referring to the region as "that Slavocracy." For a quarter of a century before the actual conflict began the populace of the North had been indoctrinated against slavery. Northern papers and speakers pictured the Southerner as an enemy of democracy, a brutal and violent individual with little respect for the rights of others. Slavery was regarded as one of the main differences between the sections. Southerners came to accept this exaggerated viewpoint and centered the defense of their entire civilization around the defense of the institution of slavery. The realities of slavery were lost in confusion. The institution became a symbol of sectional differences—of southern superiority or corruption, depending upon the point of view. Growing sentiment on both sides was less a matter of real differences than a result of strong emotional reactions arising from these differences. North and South entered the attack or defense with the enthusiasm of a moral crusade.

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[5] The historian, George Bancroft, after hearing Thornwell discuss an Aristotelian principle before a dinner given in Thornwell's honor in New York, sent him a copy of Aristotle with the following tribute on the flyleaf: "A testimonial of regard to the Rev. J. H. Thornwell, the most learned of the learned." (*Souvenir of the Diamond Jubilee General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in the United States* [Augusta, Ga., 1936], pp. 18–19.)

[6] "According to Mr. Alfred Lanneau, Charleston, South Carolina, the calls for Palmer's services in Northern churches led the Southern Commissioners to the Assembly in 1853, in a meeting called for the purpose, to express their unanimous opinion that he should not leave the South" (Johnson, p. 147 *n*).

Despite intense feeling between the sections, as late as the summer of 1859 there was strong sentiment in the South for the Union.[7] Several conditions were responsible for this attitude. Generally the South had cared little whether Kansas became a slave or a free state. Many leaders in the South believed that its best interests could be served within the Union. There was a growing opinion that the Republican party was moving toward conservatism. General prosperity throughout the Southland nurtured the conservative viewpoint, especially in Louisiana, which was enjoying its greatest period of prosperity. "Economic interests indissolubly bound that state to those of the West and North. From those states, Louisiana dreaded to sever her political connections, and whatever else was done, the Mississippi River must be kept open to free and unrestricted commerce. Furthermore, if the federal government attempted to coerce the South by forcible collection of the revenue, New Orleans would be the first to suffer, being open to attack by no less than five routes from the Gulf and from the upper Mississippi."[8]

On October 16, 1859, the complacency of the South was shaken by John Brown's raid on Harper's Ferry. The local significance of the raid was small. It was quickly squelched; Brown was hanged and most of his party was killed or captured. Virginia slaves were unmoved by the action. The reaction in the press and on the platform throughout the North and South was immediate and violent. Northern radicals were as quick to approve Brown's action as northern conservatives were to disapprove. The southern response to the incident was even more violent than the northern. They read into Brown's attempt the real intent of the abolitionists. The South faced the cold reality that Brown had intended to start a servile war with its attendant horrors. Radical opinion in the North attracted greatest attention and received widest publicity. At a time when their ownership of land was increasing, even the poorer class of whites in the South now believed that the North was determined to set the Negro free. Brown's raid incited their fears and their hatred. Secession became the poor man's cry. At the height of this bitterness the presidential campaign opened. Lincoln's election was insured by the split in the Democratic party. Although conservative Southerners saw no cause for secession in Lincoln's election, the more radical element was convinced that Lincoln would never stop until slavery was destroyed.

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[7] See Dwight L. Dumond, *The Secession Movement, 1860–1861* (New York, 1931), and *idem, Southern Editorials on Secession* (New York, 1931).

[8] Dumond, *Secession Movement,* p. 126.

The Presbyterian church had not been quiescent in her attitude toward slavery and secession. In 1818 the General Assembly had declared slavery to be a "gross violation of the most precious and sacred rights of human nature, and utterly inconsistent with the laws of God, and utterly irreconcilable with the spirit and principle of the Gospel of Christ."[9] In reply the Synod of South Carolina and Georgia in 1834 "Resolved unanimously, That in the opinion of this Synod Abolition Societies and the principles upon which they are formed in the United States are inconsistent with the personal interests of the slaves, the right of slaveholders, and the great principles of our political institutions."[10] In view of the actions of the General Assembly, the question of southern ecclesiastical separation is alluded to several times in the 1836 Minutes of the Synod.[11] The following year the Synod of South Carolina and Georgia declared the action of the General Assembly of 1818 regarding slavery void and without authority.[12]

In 1838 a drastic resolution was introduced in the Synod of South Carolina and Georgia, declaring the jurisdiction of the General Assembly at an end and the Synod independent.[13] The motion failed to carry, but it was clear that if the union of the northern and southern parts of the Presbyterian church were to be preserved, slavery would need to be regarded as a civil and domestic issue rather than a subject for ecclesiastical legislation.[14]

Palmer had not been in sympathy with the attitude and action of the General Assembly, but he hoped for harmony between the factions of the Presbyterian church. Before the General Assembly in Philadelphia in 1858 he declared: "I believe the Church is panting for union, in spite of all the forebodings and the warnings which our Fathers have given in this Assembly. I am glad that I am young . . . I hope to live to see the day when prejudice will be thrown aside . . . when all the branches of the Presbyterian Church finally will come together . . . and form one united society."[15]

Less than a month before Palmer delivered his Thanksgiving sermon, November 29, 1860, a resolution was presented in the Synod of South Carolina calling for all ministers and elders, South, to let their positions be known, calling for the severance of relations with the General Assembly, and finally calling for the appointment of a committee to consider the formation of a southern assembly.[16] The motion was tabled by a vote of twenty-seven to twenty-one, but the die was cast.

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[9] Minutes of the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church (1818), II, 6, Historical Foundation of the Presbyterian and Reformed Churches, Inc., Montreat, N.C.

[10] Minutes of the Synod of South Carolina and Georgia (1834), I, 344–358.

[11] William Childs Robinson, *Columbia Theological Seminary and the Presbyterian Church* (Decatur, Ga., 1931), p. 30.

[12] Minutes of the Synod of South Carolina and Georgia (1837), II, 19.

[13] Minutes of the Synod of South Carolina and Georgia (1837), II, 41–42.

[14] Robinson, p. 33.

[15] Reported by Rev. George Howe, *Southern Presbyterian Rev.*, XI (1858), 278.

With keen anxiety Palmer had contemplated the approaching church schism. He had likewise watched with eagerness the actions of his mother state, South Carolina, as step by step she had moved toward secession and war. By Thanksgiving, 1860, his agitation became unbearable. Palmer believed that it was his duty as a minister to speak his convictions. He declared in the introduction of the sermon: "At a juncture so solemn as the present, with the destiny of a great people waiting upon the decision of an hour, it is not lawful to be still. Whoever may have influence to shape public opinion at such a time must lend it, or prove faithless to a trust as solemn as any to be accounted for at the bar of God." In response to this divine compulsion, Palmer delivered his Thanksgiving sermon on November 29, 1860.[17]

From the beginning of Palmer's ministry in New Orleans in 1856 until the outbreak of war, his Sunday audiences usually were two to three times the size of the church membership.[18] His catholic spirit won friends among all creeds and callings. Jews, Catholics, Protestants, unaffiliates, and visitors from all sections of the country who constantly thronged the Crescent City, were among those in Palmer's overflow audiences.[19] Often referred to by the press as "one of the most respectable congregations in the city," the membership of the First Presbyterian Church in 1860 numbered about 530. According to occupation, available evidence indicates that some fifty percent of the membership was composed of people from the upper educational, economic, and social strata.[20] The second largest number represented

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[16] Minutes of the Synod of South Carolina (Nov., 1860), p. 6.

[17] There is no evidence to indicate that Palmer's utterance was prompted by motives other than those stated in the sermon.

[18] In his *Diary*, which he kept for some six months after his arrival in New Orleans in December, 1856, Palmer consistently referred to the large size of his audiences: "[Dec. 21, 1856] Day very cold and House full. . . . [Dec. 28, 1856] Preached in the morning to a large and attentive House. . . . [Jan. 4, 1857] Preached to a very crowded House. . . . [Jan. 11, 1857] Congregation large and attentive. . . . [Jan. 18, 1857] A severely cold day; but had a large audience, the Hall being nearly filled. [Jan. 25, 1857] House fuller than ever before. Every inch covered by the audience. [Feb. 1, 1857] The Hall was filled to completion. . . . [Feb. 8, 1857] Day cold and inclement—House full. . . . [Feb. 15, 1857] Day pleasant & congregation larger than ever before." (Palmer's *Diary*, Historical Foundation of the Presbyterian and Reformed Churches, Inc.)

[19] Rev. Dr. J. W. Caldwell, Palmer's son-in-law, to writer, Jan. 21, 1942. Also Dr. Dunbar Ogden, former pastor of the Napoleon Street Presbyterian Church, to writer, Jan. 22, 1942. Palmer preached Ogden's ordination and installation sermon. Johnson, *passim*, makes several references to the cosmopolitan make-up of Palmer's overflow audiences.

[20] The following categories were included in these strata: attorneys, physicians, accountants, commission merchants, brokers, cotton factors, contractors, proprietors, and managers. This calculation was based upon a sampling of church members whose occupations were listed in the *City Directories of New Orleans, Louisiana, 1859–1861.*

"white collar" workers.[21] The remainder, some ten percent, were laborers.

Between 1857 and 1861, a number of persons were admitted to membership in the church from congregations located in cities in the Midwest and East, such as St. Louis, Boston, New York, and Philadelphia.[22] Therefore, it is probable that there were members on the church roll who were abolitionist in viewpoint. Furthermore, the maintenance of the financial and social structure of New Orleans depended in part upon maintaining amicable trade relations with the North. Northern dollars and finished products that flowed in a steady stream down the Mississippi and along the Atlantic seaboard were exchanged for raw materials from the New Orleans area. The port of New Orleans was one of the largest and busiest in the nation. Secession and war would, at least temporarily, disrupt commerce. A segment of Palmer's membership was composed of citizens whose livelihood was directly dependent upon unhampered commerce, and the financial welfare of many others was indirectly dependent upon a continuation of the *status quo*. As Rogers stated, "Many were halting between two opinions."[23] Such was the congregation, some 2000 persons, that packed the auditorium of the First Presbyterian Church from floor to gallery.

For some fifteen years Palmer had employed the extemporaneous style in the pulpit, speaking from a short outline, usually memorized.[24] Contrary to his accustomed manner of preparation and delivery, Palmer wrote out his Thanksgiving sermon and read it in a calm voice without overt action. "The calmness of the speaker was the calmness of deep emotion held in check by the solemnity of the occasion."[25]

Palmer opened the sermon by referring to the governor's proclamation setting aside Thanksgiving as a day of prayer, as recognition of "the existence of a personal God whose will shapes the destiny of nations, and that sentiment of religion in man which points to Him as the needle to the pole." He called attention to the gravity of the times: "It is not to be concealed that we are in the most fearful and perilous crisis which has occurred in our history as a nation. The cords which, during four-fifths of a century, have bound together this growing republic are now strained to their utmost tension; they just need the touch of fire to part asunder forever. Like a ship laboring in the storm and suddenly grounded upon some treacherous shoal —every timber of this vast confederacy strains and groans under the pressure."

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[21] This stratum included such categories as salesmen, clerks, bookkeepers, and stenographers.

[22] Ledger in possession of the First Presbyterian Church of New Orleans, listing members received between 1857 and 1876.

[23] William O. Rogers, in Johnson, p. 219. Rogers, a member of Palmer's church and a distinguished citizen of New Orleans, was present at the delivery of the sermon.

[24] Johnson, p. 81. A collection of these outlines is available at the Historical Foundation of the Presbyterian and Reformed Churches, Inc.

[25] William O. Rogers, in Johnson, p. 219.

In a summary sentence the various causes of the growing crisis were arrayed: "Sectional divisions, the jealousy of rival interests, the lust of political power, a bastard ambition which looks to personal aggrandizement rather than to the public weal, a reckless radicalism which seeks for the subversion of all that is ancient and stable, and a furious fanaticism which drives on its ill-considered conclusion with utter disregard of the evil it engenders—all these combine to create a portentous crisis, the like of which we have never known before, and which puts to a crucifying test the virtue, the patriotism and the piety of the country."

A common criticism of Palmer's sermon by abolitionist newspapers and northern colleagues was that the speaker, under the excitement of the times, had spoken in haste; that the sermon was "the product of an enthusiastic nature carried beyond the bounds of its own convictions by the excitement of a great emergency."[26] In the light of Palmer's stated reason for delivering the sermon, the accusation testifies to the irreconcilable breach between men of religion in the North and South, for in the introduction Palmer reminded the audience that during his entire ministry he had never meddled with political questions; that he had "never obtruded, either publicly or privately," upon a single man, his opinions regarding political subjects. Referring to recent events in the political and religious fields and his calm deliberation prior to arriving at a decision to speak upon the subject, he declared:

> During the heated canvass which has just been brought to so disastrous a close, the seal of a rigid and religious silence has not been broken.
>
> . . . Most clearly did it appear to me that but one issue was before us; an issue soon to be presented in a form which would compel the attention. That crisis might make it more imperative upon me as a Christian, and a divine to speak in language admitting no misconstruction. Until then, aside from the din and strife of parties, I could only mature, with solitary and prayerful thought, the destined utterance. The hour has come.
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> . . . I sincerely pray God that I may be forgiven if I have misapprehended the duty incumbent upon me today; for I have ascended this pulpit under the agitation of feeling natural to one who is about to deviate from the settled policy of his public life. It is my purpose—not as your organ, compromitting you, whose opinions are for the most part unknown to me—but on my sole responsibility to speak upon the one question of the day; and to state the duty, which, as I believe, patriotism and religion alike require of us all.

The organization of the speech was simple. Palmer first contended that the people of the South were confronted with a "providential trust . . . to conserve and to perpetuate the institution of slavery as now existing." The four arguments that bound the South to assume its "providential trust" were the "*principle of self preservation*," duty "*as the constituted guardian of the slaves themselves*," duty "*to the civilized world*," and duty "*to defend the cause of God and religion*." The latter portion of the speech called attention to the history of the growing abolition "fanaticism," placing the responsibility for the impending conflict on the North. One by one he examined the currently alleged possibilities for avoiding the crisis and proclaimed that each and all attempts at conciliation would fail.

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[26] *Biblical Repertory and Princeton Review*, 33 (1861), 167–171.

When Palmer contended that the South's duty was "to conserve and to perpetuate the institution of slavery as it now exists," he spoke in terms of the present only:

> Baffled as our wisdom may now be, in finding a solution of this intricate social problem, it would nevertheless be the height of arrogance to pronounce what changes may or may not occur in the distant future.
>
> . . . What modifications of soil and climate may hereafter be produced, what consequent changes in the products on which we depend, what political revolutions may occur among the races which are now enacting the great drama of history; all such inquiries are totally irrelevant because no prophetic vision can pierce the darkness of that future. . . . All that we claim for . . . ourselves is liberty to work out this problem guided by nature, and God without obtrusive interference from abroad.
>
> . . . It is just this impertinence of human legislation, setting bounds to what God only can regulate, that the South is called this day to resent and resist.

In a series of rhetorical questions, Palmer advanced the argument that the South was bound by the principle of self-preservation to defend the institution of slavery:

> Need I pause to show how this system of servitude underlies and supports our material interests? That our wealth consists in our lands and in the serfs who till them? That from the nature of our products they can only be cultivated by labor which must be controlled in order to be certain? That any other than a tropical race must faint and wither beneath the tropical sun? Need I pause to show how this system is interwoven with our entire social fabric? That these slaves form parts of our households, even as our children; and that, too, through a relationship recognized and sanctioned in the scriptures of God even as the other? Must I pause to show how it has fashioned our modes of life, and determined all our habits of thought and feeling, and moulded the very type of our civilization? How then can the hand of violence be laid upon it without involving our existence?

He concluded this argument by reminding the audience that the so-called free states also had social problems peculiar to their section: a teeming population that the soil could not support; their wealth dependent upon arts, created by artificial wants; the external friction between capital and labor, with labor cheapened and often displaced by new mechanical inventions. Subtly Palmer reminded the free states that the South had never sought to weaken the foundations of "their" social order; that the North had always had the sympathy and prayers of the South in its search for a solution to its social problems. The North, he contended, should be equally just and sympathetic toward the South by leaving her free to work out her social and economic well-being.

In advancing his second argument, that the South was duty bound "*as the constituted guardians of the slaves themselves,*" Palmer stressed the interdependence of the two races, contended that the worst foes of the black race were those who meddled in their behalf, and placed his religious views in harmony with the patriarchal system: "My servant, whether born in my house or bought with my money, stands to me in the relation of a child. Though providentially owing me service, which providentially I am bound to exact, he is, nevertheless, my brother and my friend; and I am to him a guardian and a father. He leans upon me for protection, for counsel, and for blessing; and so long as the relation continues no power, but the power of almighty God, shall come between him and me."

With directness and simplicity Palmer reviewed the Negro's certain plight if freed, concluding that the South was duty bound to preserve the existing relationship, thus saving him from a "doom worse than death."

> Indeed the experiment has been grandly tried of precipitating them upon freedom which they know not how to enjoy; and the dismal results are before us in statistics that astonish the world. With the fairest portions of the earth in their possession and with the advantage of a long discipline as cultivators of the soil, their constitutional indolence has converted the most beautiful islands of the sea into a howling waste. It is not too much to say that if the South should, at this moment, surrender every slave, the wisdom of the entire world, united in solemn council, could not solve the question of their disposal. Their transportation to Africa, even if it were feasible, would be but the most refined cruelty; they must perish with starvation before they could have time to relapse into their primitive barbarism. Their residence here, in the presence of the vigorous Saxon race, would be but the signal for their rapid extermination before they had time to waste away through listlessness, filth, and vice. Freedom would be their doom; and equally from both they call upon us, their providential guardians, to be protected.

For one so steeped in the religious vindication of slavery, one might have expected Palmer to overlook the economics involved. Not so. In support of his third contention, that the South owed a duty "*to the civilized world*" to protect slavery, he dwelt upon the economic issue. In an argument lucid, cogent, and figurative, Palmer reminded the audience that the very forces that had waged increasing warfare against slavery, had grown more and more dependent upon it for "sustenance and wealth"; that in the final analysis "all branches of industry fall back upon the soil." Continuing, he pointed out how slavery had worked to the mutual benefit of both the North and the South:

> In the happy partnership which has grown up in providence between the tribes of this confederacy, our industry has been concentrated on agriculture. To the North we have cheerfully resigned all the profits arising from manufacture and

> commerce. Those profits they have, for the most part, fairly earned, and we have never begrudged them. We have sent them our sugar and bought it back when refined; we have sent them our cotton and bought it back when spun into thread or woven into cloth. Almost every article we use, from the shoe-lachet to the most elaborate and costly article of luxury, they have made and we have bought; and both sections have thriven by the partnership. . . .

The master stroke, however, was Palmer's declaration that not only the wealth of the North but that of England, and in turn other parts of the world, had been greatly increased by the products of southern soil produced by Negro labor: ". . . this the enriching commerce, which has built the splendid cities and marble palaces, of England as well as America, has been largely established upon the products of our soil; and the blooms upon Southern fields gathered by black hands, have fed the spindles and looms of Manchester and Birmingham not less than of Lawrence and Lowell. Strike now a blow at this system of labor and the world itself totters at the stroke."

In a series of rhetorical questions rich in Biblical imagery, Palmer concluded this defense of slavery: "Shall we permit that blow to fall? Do we not owe it to civilized man to stand in the breach and stay the uplifted arm? If the blind Samson lays hold of the pillars which support the arch of the world's industry, how many more will be buried beneath its ruins than the lords of the Philistines?"

In his final argument, Palmer contended that in defending slavery the South was defending "*the cause of God and religion*," that the abolitionist spirit was undeniably atheistic, and that under the disguise of advocating human rights it was as vicious as the "demon which erected its throne upon the guillotine in the days of Robespierre and Marat. . . ." Palmer believed that the abolitionists, "by striking at all subordination and law," were striking at God. The logic of such a stand can be understood only in the light of Palmer's belief in the divine justification of slavery. He believed that Providence would solve the problem in its own good time and was opposed to the idea that a portion of society had the right to force the issue, and thus supersede the Almighty:

> Under this specious cry of reform, it demands that every evil shall be corrected, or society become a wreck—the sun must be stricken from the heavens, if a spot be found upon his disc. The Most High, knowing his own power which is infinite, and his own wisdom which is unfathomable, can afford to be patient. But these self-constituted reformers must quicken the activity of Jehovah or compel his abdication.
>
> . . . In the imperfect state of human society, it pleases God to allow evils which check others that are greater. But what reck [sic] they of this—these fierce zealots who undertake to drive the chariot of the sun? Working out the single and false idea which rides them like a nightmare, they dash athwart the spheres, utterly disregarding the delicate mechanism of Providence; which moves on, wheels within wheels, with pivots and balances and springs, which the great

> designer alone can control. This spirit of atheism, which knows no God who tolerates evil, no Bible which sanctions law, and no conscience that can be bound by oaths and covenants, has selected us for its victims, and slavery for its issue.

Charging the South with the sacred trust of defending "religion" and "truth," Palmer concluded his argument with pathetic proof: "In this trust, we are resisting the power which wars against constitutions and laws and compacts, against Sabbaths and sanctuaries, against the family, the state, and the church; which blasphemously invades the prerogatives of God, and rebukes the Most High for the errors of his administration; which if it cannot snatch the reins of empire from his grasp, will lay the universe in ruins at his feet."

In a terse, clear, internal summary, so characteristic of his style, Palmer concluded the first portion of the sermon with the following phrases: "This argument, then, which sweeps over the entire circle of our relations, touches the four cardinal points of duty *to ourselves, to our slaves, to the world, and to Almighty God.* It established the nature of our present trust, to *preserve and transmit our existing system of domestic servitude, with the right, unchallenged by man, to go and root itself wherever Providence and nature may carry it.*"

In the latter part of the sermon, Palmer directed his attention to the possibility of averting the conflict. Referring to the recent presidential election, he pointed out that the three national candidates more or less divided the vote of the South, but that the North, "with unexampled unanimity," had cast its vote for a sectional candidate representing a sectional party prejudiced against the "established and constitutional rights and immunities and institutions of the South." To him this meant a government of "section over section; a government using constitutional forms only to embarrass and divide the section ruled, and one serving as a fortress through whose embrasures the "canon of legislation" would be employed against the South. Commenting upon the argument that the president-elect had been chosen by a majority under proper conditions, Palmer retorted that no despotism was more "absolute than that of an unprincipled democracy and no tyranny more galling than that exercised through constitutional formulas," that the Constitution had been "converted to an engine of oppression," and that the continuance of the Union would thereafter imply southern vassalage. In view of this impending fate, Palmer was ready to bolt the Union:

> I say it with solemnity and pain, this Union of our forefathers is already gone. It existed but in mutual confidence, the bonds of which were ruptured in the late election. Though its form should be preserved, it is, in fact destroyed.
>
> . . . For myself I say, that under the rule which threatens us, I throw off the yoke of this Union as readily as did our ancestors the yoke of King George III, and for causes immeasurably stronger than those pleaded in their celebrated declaration.

Palmer left little doubt that he considered Lincoln's election the last straw; that henceforth the executive branch of the government would do all in its power to "arrest the tendency to make slavery national and perpetual." Rather than submit to such conditions he was ready for conflict, and "since the conflict must be joined, the responsibility of this issue rests not with us, who have ever acted upon the defensive. . . ."

Palmer approached the conclusion of the sermon with a rhetorical question: "What say you to this, to whom this great providential trust of conserving slavery is assigned? 'Shall the throne of iniquity have fellowship with thee, which frameth mischief by a law?' " Not content with merely asking for action, he set forth a general plan through which action should be channeled:

> Let the people in all the Southern states, in solemn council assembled, reclaim the powers they have delegated. Let those conventions be composed of men whose fidelity has been approved,—men who bring the wisdom, experience and firmness of age to support and announce principles which have long been matured. Let these conventions decide firmly and solemnly what they will do with this great trust committed to their hands. Let them pledge each other in sacred covenant, to uphold and perpetuate what they cannot resign without dishonor and palpable ruin. Let them further, take all the necessary steps looking to separate and independent existence; and initiate measures for framing a new and homogeneous confederacy. Thus, prepared for every contingency, let the crisis come.

Through the years Palmer had yearned for a peaceful settlement of the grave issue. Even during the fleeting moments of the sermon he again searched his conscience for an alternative, but he could not escape reality: the antagonism was too great, both parties were too deeply involved to make compromise possible. Referring to the northern attitude in a clear, simple, statement Palmer pointed out the impasse: "A whole generation has been educated to look upon the system with abhorrence as a national blot. They hope, and look, and pray for its extinction within a reasonable time, and cannot be satisfied unless things are seen drawing to that conclusion. We, on the contrary, as its constituted guardians, can demand nothing less than that it should be left open to expansion subject to no limitations save those imposed by God and nature."

Moving into the final portion of his peroration Palmer warned that the hour of decision had come, that the South must take full advantage of the historic moment or eventually be doomed forever. In a declaration rich in imagery and pathetic proof, he charged his hearers with their responsibility to conscience and the future, vividly portraying the curse that would befall them and their posterity, if derelict in their duty:

> If she succumbs now, she transmits that curse as an heirloom to posterity. We may, for a generation, enjoy comparative ease, gather up our feet in our beds, and die in peace; but our children will go forth beggared from the homes of their

fathers. Fishermen will cast their nets where your proud commercial navy now rides at anchor, and dry them upon the shore now covered with your bales of merchandise. Sapped, circumvented, undermined, the institutions of your soil will be overthrown; and within five and twenty years, the history of St. Domingo will be the record of Louisiana. If dead men's bones can tremble, ours will move under the muttered curses of sons and daughters, denouncing the blindness and love of ease which have left them an inheritance of woe.

Ethical and pathetic proof, as well as appeal to tradition, were the bright tools in Palmer's chest: "It only remains to say, that whatever be the fortunes of the South, I accept them for my own. Born upon her soil, of a father thus born before me—from an ancestry that occupied it while yet it was a part of England's possessions—she is in every sense, my mother. I shall die upon her bosom—she shall know no peril, but it is my peril—no conflict, but it is my conflict—and no abyss of ruin, into which I shall not share her fall. May the Lord God cover her head in this her day of battle!"

Since Palmer's sermon was only one among many delivered in New Orleans on Thanksgiving Day, it is necessary to consider why it received greater acclaim than those of his colleagues. In the first place, Palmer was regarded as the most able pulpiteer and speaker in the city. Furthermore, his deviation from a set policy of never referring to politics in the pulpit gave added weight to his utterance. His "Divine Justification of Slavery" argument, which attempted to give the southern position a logical religious foundation, placed the issue on high moral grounds and appealed to religious groups. In the wake of the national election, Palmer's bold pronouncement that henceforth the executive branch of the government would employ its power in forcing the South into a state of vassalage, stirred a considerable segment of southern opinion. The sermon was far bolder in language, stronger in argument, and more definite in proposing a solution to the impending crisis than others delivered in New Orleans. Conceived after mature consideration and written with painstaking care, the utterance was a masterpiece of pathetic proof which befitted the temper of the time. Public opinion was seeking a voice to crystallize its motives, a voice to marshal and direct it along a course of action. Palmer's utterance was an antidote to this anxiety. Written in advance of delivery, through the press the sermon reached the public in perfect form.

The departure from his accustomed style of extemporaneous delivery did not mar the impact of the sermon. Its effect upon the audience was profound. William O. Rogers declared: "It has been my good fortune to hear some of the great pulpit and political orators of my generation, but I cannot recall an occasion when the effect upon the audience was so profound. After the benediction, in solemn silence, no man speaking to his neighbor, the great congregation of serious and thoughtful men and women dispersed; but afterwards the drums beat and the bugles sounded; for New Orleans was shouting secession."[27]

[27] In Johnson, p. 220.

On Friday, November 30, the New Orleans *Daily Delta* announced that Palmer's sermon would be published in the Saturday *Weekly Delta* and could be had "in wrappers in the counting room." An editorial in the same issue of the *Delta* stated, "all who heard the great discourse declare it to be the ablest ever delivered by its accomplished author." The sermon was published Saturday, December 1, in the *Delta.* It was republished on Sunday, December 2, with a front-page article concerning the sermon. After commending Palmer most highly as a "Christian gentleman and scholar" and a "Southern patriot" the article closed with this statement: ". . . a more cogent, exhaustive, logical and impressive production of not greater length we have never met with coming either from pulpit or rostrum. It rose far above the conventional forms and phrases of an ordinary sermon. It rose infinitely above the usual thought and rhetoric of a political speech. It was more than eloquent; it was sacramental in its fervor. But the language of praise is out of place in speaking of it."

In the next issue of the *Delta,* December 4 (there was no Monday publication), the sermon appeared for the third time, with a short editorial: "*Dr. Palmer's Sermon.*–Scarcely any apology is necessary to be made to our readers on account of the republication of Dr. Palmer's Sermon, which appears, for the third time, in the *Delta* this morning. When we state that we reproduce it in accordance with the urgent request of a large number of our friends, and to supply a demand which seems yet far from exhausted, although the supply from this office alone has exceeded thirty thousand copies, we trust that no further explanation will be required."

Prior to printing the full text of Palmer's sermon on Monday, December 3, the New Orleans *Daily Crescent* carried a notice on Friday, November 30, praising it and the speaker: "Of all the discourses delivered yesterday, that of the Reverend Dr. Palmer, of the First Presbyterian Church, (one of the largest and most respectable congregations in the city) was the most vigorous and striking, and best adapted to what people have a right to expect on Thanksgiving Day. The reverend gentleman's address was yesterday afternoon and last evening the talk everywhere."[28]

Summaries, excerpts and, in many instances, full texts were also published in papers throughout the South and in secular publications in the North. Said the Mobile *Daily Advertiser* of December 2: "Reverend Dr. Palmer, the able, brilliant and powerful preacher in charge of the First Presbyterian Church, delivered a sermon which the Delta commends as most 'decided and patriotic,' and the 'ablest ever delivered by the great divine.' It produced a sensation, and was the talk everywhere in the city. Thirty-thousand copies were ordered to be printed for general distribution through the country." On December 14 this paper stated that "at the request of a number of our friends, we shall publish in our edition of Sunday morning the sermon delivered by Reverend Dr. Palmer. . . ."

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[28] New Orleans *Daily Crescent,* Nov. 29 [sic], 1860.

On December 13 the *Tri-Weekly Southern Guardian*, Columbia, South Carolina, declared that Palmer's sermon had been read with great interest and that "it rose to the full height of great questions which now fill the public mind, and have so quickened the general conscience. We hope to find room, by-and-by, for this sermon. . . ." On the same day the Charleston *Tri-Weekly Courier* called attention to Thanksgiving Day in Louisiana and the many sermons that were delivered from the pulpit. Referring to Palmer's sermon, the *Courier* stated, "Of that of the Reverend Dr. Palmer, the able and eloquent pastor of the First Presbyterian Church, I hear that it was strongly secessional in its tendency. It is in type, and will be published in the course of the week."[29]

In Columbia, the *Southern Presbyterian* called attention to the sermon in this notice: "This is a concise and powerful exhibition of the present contest between the North and South, and a patriotic, out-spoken declaration of the preacher's view of the duty of the Southern people in regard to it. Its delivery produced a profound sensation in New Orleans. We hope to be able, next week, to publish it in full. In the meantime, as a matter of great interest to many of our readers, we give the following extracts which will show Dr. Palmer's sentiments on the 'great question'."[30]

The sermon in full was also published in the Jackson *Weekly Mississippian*, December 19, 1860, and in the Augusta, Georgia, *Southern Field and Fireside*, December 29.

Some northern secular papers referred to the address, usually for the purpose of attacking its basic principle, but there seems to be no evidence that the sermon appeared in complete form in northern papers. The Philadelphia *Christian Observer and Presbyterian Witness* on January 10, 1861, carried an answer by Reverend R. L. Beck to Palmer's charge of northern aggression against southern constitutional rights. An article in the *Southern Presbyterian* on December 29 shed considerable light on the bolder attacks of Northern secular papers and revealed the strong tension existing between the two factions:

> A Northern religious paper tells its readers that Dr. Palmer, in his recent sermon on the public crisis, advocates the extension of slavery everywhere, and the reopening of the slave trade.
>
> 'The Presbyter', an Old School Presbyterian paper of Cincinnati, which has attained a bad eminence in our Church, tells its readers, "Dr. Palmer has studied the book of providence, and has found out that the church in the South is a missionary society, established principally to extend and perpetuate slavery."
>
> We have only to remark on this, that it is another proof that peace and good understanding between the North and South are impossible.

Referring indirectly to Dr. Thornwell's and Dr. Palmer's sermons, the Reverend Henry Van Dyke, First Presbyterian Church, Brooklyn, New

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[29] Dec. 8, 1860.

[30] Dec. 15; the full text was published Dec. 22, 1860.

York, sought to disclose the real motive which underlay the attitude of southern ministers toward slavery and secession. His viewpoint was not held generally by northern Presbyterians:

> Fanaticism at the North is one chief stumbling block in the way of the Gospel at the South. This is one great grievance that presses today upon the hearts of our Christian brethren at the South. This, in a measure, explains why such men as Dr. Thornwell, of South Carolina, and Dr. Palmer of New Orleans—men whose genius and learning and piety would adorn any state or station—are willing to secede from the Union. They feel that the influence of the Christian ministry is hindered, and their power to do good to both Master and slave crippled, by the constant agitations of abolitionism in our national councils, and the incessant turmoil excited by the unscriptural dogma, that slaveholding is a sin.[31]

Under the title, "Short Notices," an article in the Philadelphia *Biblical Repertory and Princeton Review* presented an analysis of the main argument in Palmer's sermon (the South's duty to conserve and perpetuate the institution of slavery as now existing). In the introduction, the article attempted to explain why the sermon was so well received throughout the South, concluding that the doctrine of the sermon, "as generally regarded" by the North, implied that four million human beings were to be kept in a state of ignorance and semibarbarism: "It has, therefore, given a fearful shock to the public mind. It has alarmed the North, as though a great gulf does exist between the North and South, a gulf which neither civil nor religious institutions can span."[32]

A few hours after delivering the sermon Palmer received requests for permission to publish the address from two groups—a group of members of his congregation and a group of townsmen, "fellow citizens and friends." He placed the sermon at their disposal. The New Orleans pamphlet edition was printed by the *True Witness and Sentinel*, and the *Sunday Delta Supplement* announced the publication on December 2 as follows: "The *True Witness and Sentinel* says that 'We will issue on Monday a large edition of Dr. Palmer's Thanksgiving sermon, in pamphlet form, together with the correspondence asking the same for publication, which has been placed in our hands. We have already orders for several thousand copies. Persons wishing others will please leave orders at our office today or Monday forenoon.' "

A second pamphlet edition of the sermon was published in Mobile, Alabama, by J. Y. Thompson Printing Company. It was bound under the same cover with the sermon delivered by Reverend W. T. Leacock at Christ Church, New Orleans, November 29, 1860, and bore the title, "The Rights of the South Defended in the Pulpits." The pamphlet edition of the sermon printed in New Orleans numbered about 30,000 copies.[33] There seems to be no evidence regarding the number of copies printed in Mobile.[34]

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[31] Richmond *Central Presbyterian,* Dec. 22, 1860.

[32] 33 (1861), 167–171.

[33] New Orleans *Daily Crescent,* Nov. 29; see also Mobile *Daily Advertiser,* Dec. 2, 1860.

The evidence indicates that Palmer's early experiences at Amherst had served to crystallize his opinons on slavery and secession. Psychological wounds had been inflicted that, legitimately or otherwise, were to span a lifetime without appreciable change. Not only had he developed strong resistance to northern attitudes, but his experience with the Amherst faculty had weakened his respect for northern integrity.

Palmer's sermon had a profound effect in New Orleans and the South. It showed a deep, sincere, and matured conviction finally breaking forth into free and solemn utterance. Highly secessional in nature and positive in its stand, it left no room for doubt. Believing that the crisis would not be averted, Palmer was ready for action. No other southern sermon on slavery and secession received greater acclaim or wider attention. The reason was simple. Palmer, in expressing his long-felt sentiments, had given religious and economic articulation to suppressed convictions of a large segment of public opinion in New Orleans and the South.

As a South Carolinian, Palmer was both acquainted and in accord with Calhoun's views on slavery and nullification. He was an able student of constitutional history, believing that the Constitution was a "compact" between states.[35] Furthermore, he was in sympathy with the actions of South Carolina as she moved toward secession.

How well Palmer's sermon reflected the attitude of southern Presbyterians was soon demonstrated. When the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church, meeting in Philadelphia, May, 1861, passed the famous "Spring Resolutions," the southern commissioners withdrew from the body. On December 4, 1861, commissioners to the first General Assembly of the southern Presbyterian church met in Atlanta, Georgia, and selected Palmer to deliver the opening sermon. The southern General Assembly ordered the sermon printed in full in the Minutes[36] and unanimously elected Palmer as moderator. The sermon not only set the tenor of the immediate occasion, but pronounced principles which guided the southern assembly for decades.[37] It is unlikely that Palmer would have been chosen to deliver the keynote address to the southern church in her hour of crisis had he not become her acknowledged leader, her master spokesman.

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[34] Since most of the many copies now available in libraries and archives in the South were printed in New Orleans, it is probable that the number published in Mobile, Alabama, did not exceed five or six thousand copies.

[35] In *Southern Presbyterian Rev.*, Apr. 1861, Palmer answered an article by Rev. R. J. Breckenridge of Kentucky entitled "Our Country, Its Perils and Its Deliverances." In his answer, entitled "A Vindication of Secession and the South from the Strictures of Reverend R. J. Breckenridge," Palmer displayed a clear and comprehensive grasp of the complete historical background, issues, and arguments concerning slavery and secession.

[36] The only known copy of the Minutes of the Convention now available is at the Historical Foundation of the Presbyterian and Reformed Churches, Inc. The address, entitled "The Headship of Christ," stressed the conviction that Christ, not Caesar, was head of the church and that its mission was strictly spiritual and in no way political. Thus, his major premise differed little from the central idea set forth by the Synod of South Carolina and Georgia as early as 1836.

[37] For almost four decades following the Civil War, Palmer successfully exerted his influence in opposition to the reunion of the northern and southern assemblies.

Although southern newspapers for the period covering this sermon are scarce and those available often have gaps, available evidence indicates that between 80,000 and 90,000 copies of the sermon were printed in New Orleans alone. Further available evidence indicates that the sermon in full was carried by papers in four other southern states: Mississippi, Alabama, Georgia, and South Carolina. Excerpts and references to the sermon were carried by other southern papers and northern publications.

In the North no utterance on slavery from a southern pulpit was more adversely received than was Palmer's sermon, and by 1862 he was frequently referred to as the "arch rebel." When Commodore Farragut's fleet stormed New Orleans in April, 1862, and General Butler's army entered the city, Butler fixed a "price" on Palmer's head, an action probably incited by the views expressed in Palmer's "Thanksgiving Sermon" and his later "Crescent Rifles" and "Washington Artillery" speeches.[38]

Today, separated from its proper setting, place, time, occasion, and audience, Palmer's sermon may appear heavy in pathetic proof, with many of the arguments less grounded in logic than in emotion. However, viewed in the light of Palmer's unreserved belief in the "divine justification of slavery," his use of proofs in the Thanksgiving sermon differed little from his accustomed style.

With the defeat of the Confederacy, the principles for which the South had fought died also. Today the sermon is unknown to most historians and rhetoricians; yet it stands as one of the most powerful utterances on slavery and secession that contributed to the formation of opinion in New Orleans and the South. Perhaps its obscurity stems less from lack of rhetorical merit than from the price often exacted of speakers whose influence is cast on the side of a losing cause.

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[38] Rev Dr. J. W. Caldwell to writer, Jan. 22, 1942.

The Senate Committee of Thirteen, December 6–31, 1860

CARROLL C. ARNOLD

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I

On December 18, 1860, the Senate of the United States referred "so much of the President's message as relates to the present agitated and distracted condition of the country" to a special committee of thirteen senators.[1] The resolution for this action had been introduced on December 6 by L. W. Powell of Kentucky, and debate on the motion had dragged through seven business days and lain over through two three-day adjournments.

The Senate's slow progress toward this decision is difficult to explain except as the result of confusion and want of faith. What was said concerning the resolution itself might have been spoken in a few hours, and the single amendment offered was quickly disposed of when Powell incorporated its object in his motion.[2] Only three senators[3] urged the resolution's defeat, though both Republicans and southern Democrats expressed doubt that the committee could succeed. Following Seward's injunction to speak little and exercise patience,[4] most Republicans left the Senate floor to the representatives of the South and the Border States.[5]

This digressive debate is interesting chiefly because it revealed that few senators really believed the sectional conflict could be settled within the halls of Congress. Republicans and Breckinridge Democrats reiterated their belief that the controversy could be resolved only if the other party relinquished its major demands. Douglas Democrats and Constitutional Unionists pled, in tones of desperation, for the sacrifices necessary to a restoration of harmony; but the compromise proposals themselves revealed their authors' despair of legislative settlements. They uniformly contained provisions for constitutional conventions where they touched upon fundamental issues. It was not the raising of a committee but slavery's right to expand that was under debate, and most legislators agreed that the final decision on this issue must come from conventions of the people.

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[1] *Cong. Globe*, 36th Cong., 2nd Sess., pp. 19, 117.

[2] *Cong. Globe*, 36th Cong., 2nd Sess., pp. 24–25, 28.

[3] Brown of Mississippi, Iverson of Georgia, and Wigfall of Texas.

[4] Seward urged "silence for the present . . . not *sullen* as last year, but respectful and patient" (Seward to Weed, Dec. 2, 1860 [W. H. Seward's Letters, Rush Rhees Library, Univ. of Rochester]).

[5] George Fort Milton (*The Eve of Conflict* [Boston, 1934], p. 523) asserted that the Republicans held up passage of the Powell resolution. No support for this interpretation can be found. The record of debate, the avowed strategy of Republican leaders, Crittenden's introduction of his compromise plan on the last day of debate, and the failure of procompromise senators to make a single concerted move to hasten a final vote, all seem to indicate that doubt and confusion were responsible for the long and largely irrelevant debate.

When Johnson of Tennessee suggested, on December 18, that the special committee be appointed immediately and debate on the state of the Union be continued in connection with other pending resolutions, Powell's measure was promptly carried. For senators who had lost hope of convincing each other by argument, this solution was ideal. The controversialists could continue to justify the cases they had already completed while a committee of their deputies made a last-minute review of the issues. Should the committee, by some inconceivable chance, discover fresh bases for legislative discussion, only the firebrands would regret it. Should the committee fail, as expected, each side could present a clearer, purer record to the tribunals of popular opinion.

The unenviable task of the Committee of Thirteen was to recapture for Congress the power of decision at a moment when that power had already been transferred to a state convention in South Carolina and to the electorate in Florida and Mississippi.[6] Its members were named by Vice-President Breckinridge on December 20, and those appointed were L. W. Powell (Ky.), chairman; J. J. Crittenden (Ky.), Jefferson Davis (Miss.), Robert Toombs (Ga.), Robert M. T. Hunter (Va.), William Bigler (Pa.), Stephen A. Douglas (Ill.), Henry M. Rice (Minn.), William H. Seward (N.Y.), James W. Grimes (Iowa), Jacob Collamer (Vt.), Benjamin F. Wade (Ohio), and James R. Doolittle (Wis.).

The selections were both wise and fair. The Border States were represented by Crittenden, Powell, and Hunter; the cotton states had Davis and Toombs; the plains had Democrats Douglas and Rice, Republicans Grimes, Wade, and Doolittle; from the Northeast came Seward and Collamer for the Republicans and Bigler for the Democrats. Ideologically, too, the committee was representative, with spokesmen for each of the three leading branches of political opinion. The Breckinridge Democrats, Toombs, Davis, and Hunter, spoke for the militant slaveholders. Opposed to them were five Republicans, all Northerners, who deplored slavery as a moral evil and represented the political party that expected to assume control of the executive branch of national government within the next three months. Between these antagonistic forces sat the compromisers, five Constitutional Unionists and northern Democrats who had actively supported the committee's creation and who monopolized whatever hope of success existed within the committee.

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[6] Alabama, South Carolina, Georgia, Florida, Mississippi, Texas, and Louisiana had each held or called elections to create state conventions empowered to determine the state's course of action. South Carolina's convention was in session and the elections in Florida and Mississippi had already been held when the Committee of Thirteen met for the first time. (Dwight Lowell Dumond, *The Secession Movement, 1860–1861* [New York, 1931], p. 148.)

Toombs, Davis, and Hunter were in almost complete agreement on the causes of, and the minimum grounds for settling, the sectional controversy. They agreed that the South had genuine unredressed grievances; that the Republican party's accession to power would constitute a threat to the interests of their section; and that secession was a justifiable course of action. They also demanded positive and irrevocable assurance that the federal government would actively protect the "right of property in man" in present and future territorial possessions. Their differences were differences of enthusiasm, not of principle or policy. They believed that the rights of their states and the rights of property were at stake; each had already counseled secession if these rights were not fully recognized and protected.

Hunter was the most moderate of these southern representatives but, on December 10, he had addressed a long letter to his constituents professing to see only the faintest hope for peaceful settlement, defending the legality of secession, and urging that should other states leave the Union it would be both right and expedient for Virginia to depart. "In the Southern Confederacy," he wrote, "they [Virginians] would find an outlet for their surplus population of slaves, not only in these States, but in whatever Territory might be acquired by the Union. Under that Government, too, they would find effectual protection for their property and institutions. In the other Confederacy their slave population would indeed be 'penned in' and 'localized' within their own borders." Finally, with an unconscious irony, Hunter urged upon his constituents some of the very ambitions for which a generation of southern legislators had upbraided the Northeast. In the new Confederacy, he said, Virginia could hold a position like New England's in the old; in the cotton states she would "find customers mainly, and not rivals."[7]

Davis, too, believed "no human power can save the Union," since full protection of slavery in the territories would not be granted by the North.[8] Only five days before the Senate voted to raise the special committee, he joined other southern congressmen in declaring, "The argument is exhausted. All hope of relief in the Union, through the agency of committees, Congressional legislation, or constitutional amendments is extinguished."[9] It was, indeed, only after Yulee of Florida moved for recision of an action excusing Davis from committee service that Davis reluctantly took his place with the other committee members.[10]

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[7] *Correspondence of Robert M. T. Hunter, 1826–1876,* Charles H. Ambler, ed., American Historical Association, *Annual Report,* 1916 (Washington, 1918), II, 337–351.

[8] S. F. Butterworth to S. L. M. Barlow, Dec. 2, 1860 (Allan Nevins, *The Emergence of Lincoln* [New York, 1950], II, 386).

[9] Washington *National Intelligencer,* Dec. 20, 1860. Robert McElroy (*Jefferson Davis* [New York, 1937], I, 228) points out that the address was written by Senator Wigfall and Representative James L. Pugh but was sent to Davis for final phrasing. It was gen-

During the debate on Powell's resolution, Davis argued that the controversy the Committee of Thirteen was to settle was scarcely open to discussion in the congressional forum. "It is not to this side of the Chamber that we should look for propositions," he told the Senate, "it is not here that we can ask for remedies. Complaints, with much amplitude of specification, have gone forth from the members on this side of the Chamber heretofore. It is not to be expected that they will be renewed, for the people have taken the subject into their own hands. States, in their sovereign capacity, have now resolved to judge. . . ."[11] Toombs had expressed the same views but, being of a more enthusiastic temperament, he was less willing than Davis to await the unfolding of events. As early as mid-November he had been actively agitating in Georgia for secession.[12] Though in early December he moderated his position somewhat, Georgia's unionists doubted that his real views had changed. Said J. Henley Smith, who was serving in Washington as Alexander H. Stephens' eye and ear: "I put no faith in Mr. Toombs' recent back down. It is only a ruse—a port he has put into in stress of weather, and has by no means abandoned the idea of making the secession voyage. He sees the coming storm of conservatism in Ga. and he feels that his own defeat in his own county, is staring him in the face."[13] Whatever the explanation for Toombs's fleeting fit of patience, he recovered swiftly and was again in the forefront of agitation during the last ten days of December.

These southern Democrats asked for what was essentially the slave-code plank that had split the national Democratic party at the Charleston Convention of 1860.[14] They were probably ready to exclude slavery from

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erally assumed that Toombs was also willing to sign but he was not in Washington at the time. Hunter was not a signer.

[10] See *Cong. Globe*, 36th Cong., 2nd Sess., p. 158, for Davis' request that he be excused and (p. 182) for the discussion incidental to Yulee's motion and Davis' expression of willingness to serve. Apparently a hurried conference of Breckinridge men was held immediately after Powell had successfully moved that Breckinridge replace Davis on the committee. Whatever induced the southern senators to bring belated pressure on Davis and to ask the Senate to rescind its actions excusing him and appointing Breckinridge, the incident aroused suspicion and irritation among Republican members and obtruded further difficulties in the way of frank and generous deliberation in the Committee of Thirteen.

[11] Speech of Dec. 10, 1860 (*Cong. Globe*, 36th Cong., 2nd Sess., p. 29).

[12] Ulrich B. Phillips, *Life of Robert Toombs* (New York, 1913), p. 200.

[13] Smith to Stephens, Dec. 20, 1860 (Alexander H. Stephens Papers, Library of Congress). Smith referred to Toombs's candidacy for election to Georgia's state convention.

[14] The majority report of the Charleston Convention's Resolutions Committee had said (1) "that Congress has no power to abolish slavery in the Territories; that the Territorial Legislature has no power to abolish slavery in any Territory nor to prohibit the introduction of slaves therein, nor any power to exclude slavery therefrom nor any power to destroy or to impair the right of property in slaves by any legislation whatever" and (2) "that the enactments of State Legislatures to defeat the faithful execution of the Fugitive Slave Law are hostile in character, subversive of the Con-

northern territories, but none was ready to make any further compromise. Since they expected no satisfactory concessions from the Republicans, Toombs, Davis, and Hunter proceeded on the assumption that the period of congressional deliberation had ended. Each had already turned his back upon the senatorial forum and called upon the people of his state to settle the issues.

Only Seward among the Republican members of the committee was disposed to entertain compromises permitting slavery in any of the territories presently held, and he was opposed to any settlement which set a precedent for future growth of the institution. His Republican colleagues, however, insisted upon establishing containment of slavery as a part of national policy.

It is ironic that Seward, who lost the Republican nomination for president in 1860 partly because he was thought too radical,[15] should emerge as the most conservative Republican in the Committee of Thirteen. In spite of his reputation as the apostle of "irrepressible conflict," other Republican leaders, Seward's constituents, and even his wife thought him too ready to compromise.[16] Republican senators held a hurried caucus on the first day of the new congressional session to, as Seward said, "try to find out whether I authorized or avowed the Evening Journal Issues and Courier articles." Seward replied vaguely that "they would know what I think & what I propose when I find out myself."[17] His views remained a mystery until the Committee of Thirteen had begun deliberating. "Gov. Seward has gone home," George G. Fogg wrote to Lincoln. "He is mum as an oyster, in relation to the duties of the Republicans in the present emergency. Some of our friends say he is badly frightened. I know not how it is."[18]

There is evidence that Seward was inclined to grant some, though not all,

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stitution, and revolutionary in their effect." Delegations from eight states left the convention when these propositions were rejected, among them those from Mississippi and Georgia. (Milton, pp. 434–439.) Virginia remained in the convention but later withdrew from the National Democratic Convention at Baltimore. Following Lincoln's election, Hunter's views gravitated toward the Davis-Toombs position. (Henry T. Shanks, *The Secession Movement in Virginia, 1847–1861* [Richmond, 1934], pp. 106–109.)

[15] Nevins, II, 235–236, 250.

[16] The Seward Letters contain thirty-four letters concerning compromise with the South, written Dec. 2–18, 1860. Thirty of these urge Seward to oppose concessions, while only four counsel compromise. Many letters in the former group express fear that Seward might fall in with the concessions suggested by Thurlow Weed in the Albany *Evening Journal* (see n. 17). Of later date but especially interesting is a letter from Mrs. Seward, apparently written Jan. 19, 1861: "You are in danger of taking the path which led Daniel Webster to an unhonored grave ten years ago. . . . I fear to hear your name execrated by the human [*sic*] & generous as I hear that of your chief counsellor [Weed] now."

[17] Seward to Weed, Dec. 3, 1860 (Seward Letters). The articles referred to contained Weed's proposals for compromise which may be found in the Albany *Evening Journal,* Nov. 30 and Dec. 1, 1860. Weed urged Republicans to accept a revised Fugitive Slave Law and a "restoration" of the Missouri Compromise line to divide existing territories into free and slave areas.

[18] Dec. 19, 1860, (Robert Todd Lincoln Collection, Library of Congress).

of the concessions sought in proposals such as Crittenden's, but it also appears that he preferred to delay final decisions until the first acts of secession had tested the unionist spirit of the country.[19] Against these leanings toward concession and delay a counterpoised consideration also governed his behavior: he had been invited to become Lincoln's Secretary of State and was about to accept. In tight places Seward would follow Lincoln's lead, and Lincoln was adamant on the territorial question.

Seward's Republican colleagues shared none of his uncertainty. Collamer, Doolittle, Grimes, and Wade were logically and emotionally committed to the proposition that slavery was a moral evil and must be contained. They also denied that the South had justifiable causes for complaint. They were prepared to stand on the contention that strict enforcement of existing laws would provide all necessary and proper protection to all classes of citizens.

Collamer and Doolittle would have preferred to decide the territorial issue on the outcome of the Kansas question,[20] a stratagem reflecting their determination to exclude slavery from all territories. Doolittle had, in fact, declared to the Republicans of Milwaukee that containment of slavery and resistance to secession were the keystones of Republicanism.[21]

James W. Grimes of Iowa agreed completely with Collamer and Doolittle but, unlike most other senators, he also foresaw the consequences of "firmness" North and South. "There will be an effort to go peacefully, but war of the most bitter and sanguinary character will be sure to follow in a short time," he confided to his wife as the debate on Powell's resolution drew to a close. Continuing, he shrewdly diagnosed the reasons for war's inevitability:

> We can never divide the army, the navy, the public lands, the public buildings, the public debt, the Mississippi River, etc., in peace. All these questions must be submitted in the end to the arbitrament of the sword, the strongest battalions will be victors. This is certainly deplorable, but there is no help for it. No reasonable concession will satisfy the rebels. It is not that Lincoln is elected, or that there are personal liberty laws in some of the States, or that their negroes occasionally run off, that troubles them. They want to debauch the moral sentiment of the people of the North, by making them agree to the proposition that slavery is a benign, constitutional system, and that it shall be extended in the end all over this continent.

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[19] This is the import of a letter Seward wrote to his friend, Israel Washburn, Dec. 16, 1860. He counseled patience and quiet until the "popular solicitude which shall awaken patriotism in the South" should gain strength "after reason shall have passed from threats to activity." (Papers of Israel Washburn, Library of Congress.)

[20] See their remarks in the Senate, Dec. 24, 1860 (*Cong. Globe*, 36th Cong., 2nd Sess., pp. 189–190).

[21] Letter to W. Y. Selleck, published in Racine *Advocate*, Nov. 28, 1860. Writing to his wife, Dec. 9, Doolittle asserted that his earlier statement had become "the keynote of the Republican position" in Congress. (James R. Doolittle Papers and Correspondence [Wisconsin MSS., Wisconsin State Historical Library].)

> There is, as you have heard, much talk about all sorts of compromises, but there is not the slightest probability that anything will be done.[22]

Finding hopeless the situation which the committee was assigned to harmonize, Grimes resigned himself to the inevitable and spoke not five sentences in all the senatorial debates on the state of the Union and the admission of Kansas.

Among the Republicans, Collamer, Doolittle, and Grimes were realists, flanked on the one side by Seward, the cautious optimist, and on the other by Ben Wade, the frontier romantic. Caution stopped Seward's mouth, resignation slowed the tongues of the realists, and Benjamin F. Wade of Ohio became the voice of Republicanism by default. Profane, intensely honest, and aggressively imperialistic, Wade was the darling of the northern extremists. On the day before Powell's resolution was finally passed, he delivered the debate's only comprehensive statement of a Republican position.

In the first three-fourths of his address Wade presented five major propositions with which almost all Republicans agreed. These were (1) that the complaints of the South were largely factious, (2) that the federal government was not constitutionally obliged to protect or even admit slavery in any territory, (3) that the Republican party had every right to assume administration of the national government without accepting any prior conditions or bowing to any threats, (4) that legislative compromises respecting slavery and allied subjects had proved unreliable in the past, and (5) that secession was no constitutional right of the states—it was revolution. Thus far Wade did not endanger the possibility of settling the conflict, for he stated no more than what all parties understood the Republican position to be.

But an incautious spirit led Wade to threaten the dissidents—a line of argument which could only reduce the possibilities of compromise. He hinted that states which refused to allow federal collection of federal revenues must be blockaded, and he offered for the Southerners' delectation his vision of the Union after secession: "I still see a glorious future for those who stand by the old flag of the nation. There lie the fair fields of Mexico all before us. The people there are prejudiced against you. They fear you intend to overrun and enslave them. . . . But, sir, if we were once released from all obligation to this institution, in six months they would invite us to take a protectorate over them." Britain's commercial interests would lead her to assist in this act of encirclement, he cried; and there would be yet more:

> [W]e will make inducements for every free black among us to find his home in a more congenial climate in Central America or in Lower Mexico, and we will be divested of every one of them; and then . . . we will adopt a homestead policy, and we will invite the poor, the destitute, industrious white man from

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[22] Letter of Dec. 16, 1860 (William Salter, *The Life of James W. Grimes* [New York, 1876], p. 132).

> every clime . . . to come in there and make his fortune. . . . I might say, sir, that, divested of this institution, who doubts that the provinces of Canada would knock at our doors in a day?[23]

Few distinguished between Wade's statements of principle and his passages of overstatement and menace. Where a moderate statement of Republican policy might have encouraged the despairing unionists in the cotton states and minimized the importance of northern extremism, the closing quarter of Wade's speech could only decrease the likelihood that calm counsels would prevail in either section.

Generally speaking, the Republicans carried into the committee room an uncompromising determination which neatly counterbalanced the dogmatism of Hunter, Toombs, and Davis. Only Seward could be called a moderate, but he was pressed from all sides to stand firm, to "show backbone." And the balance of suspicion was as nice as the balance of opposition on policy. Republicans remembered that only a year before South Carolinians had seriously debated reopening the international slave trade[24] and the hot cries of "Cotton is king!" were still being heard in the speeches of such southern extremists as Senators Wigfall, Iverson, Toombs, and Brown. At the same time, southern committee members might certainly be excused if they supposed that the threats of aggression in the speeches of men like Wade indicated the quality of tenderness to be expected from the new Republican administration.

As debaters commonly do, the antagonists in this inconclusive clash assumed their ultimate positions of rhetorical defense. The Southerners took their stand upon legal rights; the Republicans dug in behind a moral justification. For the moment at least each side believed itself impregnably fortressed, and neither was disposed to reconsider any questions of probability or expediency. There was, in consequence, no room for compromise unless the mood of suspicion and obduracy were first abated—unless new uncertainties and doubts could be made to grow in the minds of the partisans.

During the first three weeks of December the advocates of compromise had begged both sides—but especially the Republicans—to make the concessions that were the Southerners' price for unity. However, the compromisers' arguments were often suspect, since many men of the center were tied to the South politically or geographically. Crittenden and Powell were Border State slaveholders; Rice and Bigler were administration Democrats who shared Buchanan's sympathy with the southern cause. When their arguments revealed their sympathies, the Republicans, at least, put them down as allies of the opposition. For example, Bigler permanently weakened his ethical resources as a counselor of compromise when he declared to the southern

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[23] Address in the Senate, Dec. 17, 1860 (*Cong. Globe,* 36th Cong., 2nd Sess., pp. 99–104).

[24] W. J. Carnathan, "The Proposal to Reopen the African Slave Trade in the South, 1854–1860," *South Atlantic Quart.,* XXV (1926), 410–429; *National Intelligencer,* Dec. 29, 1859.

Democrats: "I am no prophet, nor the son of a prophet; but I predict that it is the last victory the Republican party will ever gain. Let us remain together, then; let us contend for your rights within the Constitution and the Union, and in a short time you who are now desponding and complaining and threatening disruption, will be the triumphant party; you and your friends north will control the Government once more. . . ."[25] Nor did Rice show a more open view when he wrote to Governor Ramsey of Minnesota, "Unless the North shall at once show a disposition to recognize the rights of the South, every Southern State must go."[26]

But it was not merely a tendency toward bias that prevented the compromisers from effectively preparing the way for committee deliberation. They argued from *topoi* that neither body of partisans accepted. For the centrists, the preservation of the Union was the highest good attainable through political action, but this was a supposition many doubted and some categorically denied. Crittenden's passionate appeals for Union at all costs illustrated the compromisers' difficulties in this respect.

Crittenden, the friend and disciple of Clay, had taken conciliation as his legislative mission. He was devoted to the Union and to compromise as a mode of achieving political decisions. "I will compromise 'to the last syllable of recorded time' to preserve the Union," he had said in 1856,[27] but he seems never to have perceived that during his long life the issue of extending or containing slavery had changed from a question of expediency to a question of moral truth versus legal right. Like most of those with whom he was closely associated, he failed to realize that the conflict had become, as Lincoln told Douglas at Galesburg in 1858: "[a] difference of sentiment–the belief on the part of one that the institution is wrong, and a policy springing from that belief which looks to the arrest of the enlargement of that wrong; and this other sentiment, that it is no wrong, and a policy sprung from that sentiment which will tolerate no idea of preventing that wrong from growing larger, and looks to there never being an end of it through all the existence of things. . . ."[28]

This basic change in the issue for decision did not enter into the compromisers' rhetorical analysis and so, when Crittenden endeavored, on December 18, to sum up the case for concession, his chief lines of persuasion fell on deaf ears. The critical problem was recognition of slavery in the southern territories, he said. He inquired "whether, for such a comparative trifle as that, the Union of this country is to be sacrificed"; and he promised that should disunion come, the slaveholding states would surely annex all territories in question anyway. Finally, using what he believed his most powerful appeal, he dilated upon the past glories of the Union and the spiritual kinship of the states.[29]

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[25] Speech in the Senate, Dec. 11, 1860 (*Cong. Globe,* 36th Cong., 2nd Sess., p. 48).

[26] Dec., 1860 (Ramsey Papers, Minnesota Historical Society, St. Paul).

[27] *Cong. Globe,* 34th Cong., 1st Sess., App. p. 763.

[28] In the fifth joint debate, Galesburg, Ill., Oct. 7, 1858.

Those who already agreed with Crittenden were deeply moved, but the radical Wade was not touched. He had observed only the day before that South Carolina's loss would be noted chiefly in the unwonted harmony that would descend upon the Senate. Nor was Toombs moved; a month before he had said that if Georgia would not give him the sword, "as God lives, I will take it myself."[30] Another extremist had told the Senate: "[I]f you suppose that we are to be amused with the clap-trap of the 4th of July froth and the idea that there is anything of sacredness in a compact between nations, or that nations inherit rights, I simply say that those among whom I live have passed that point."[31] Even the relatively moderate Hunter must have rejected such appeals after calculating for his constituents the practical advantages of secession.

In truth, many no longer shuddered at the thought of a broken Union, and there were those in the Senate who had learned to rejoice in that thought. Neither Crittenden nor the other Constitutional Unionists and administration Democrats were reaching with their arguments and appeals those men whom they must in some measure persuade if a compromise were to be found. They spoke instead to their friends, and they built their arguments upon a scale of values exclusively their own.

Douglas was not closely associated with either side in the controversy. He could view the issues of debate without a moral or partisan passion, yet his arguments were little more persuasive than those of his friends. His very indifference to the moral aspects of slavery circumscribed the intellectual territory in which he could search for new arguments and led him to despise those who had placed a moral scruple above domestic unity. Hence when Douglas looked upon the Republicans, he saw unreasonable and self-seeking men wearing morality as a mask to cover partisan greed: "[T]he first three weeks of Congress convinced him that the real obstacle to effective adjustment was the Republican party. Many of their leaders thought they could maintain 'a permanent Republican ascendancy in the Northern States, but not in the whole Union!' Because of this they 'desired war and disunion under the pretext of saving the Union'—if only it could be done 'without making them responsible before the people.'"[32]

As their assumptions and premises became known, the counselors of compromise lost ethical stature in Republican eyes, and their chances of success were correspondingly diminished. The men of the center were, in effect, asking both sides to sacrifice principles for the sake of preserving the Union,

[29] Address to the Senate (*Cong. Globe*, 36th Cong., 2nd Sess., pp. 112–114).

[30] Phillips, p. 202.

[31] Senator Louis T. Wigfall, speech to the Senate, Dec. 12, 1860 (*Cong. Globe*, 36th Cong., 2nd Sess., p. 74).

[32] Milton, p. 521.

while many whom they must persuade had little desire to live under a union not governed by the principles they were asked to give up. The cause of compromise was weakened because the compromisers failed to approach Southerners, and especially Republicans, as men who honestly believed they were pursuing the highest good. Under these handicaps unionists and northern Democrats needed to search for lines of persuasion that would so unsettle and disturb the partisans that they could again prefer unity to the preservation of their rights and principles outside the Union. Only by creating this kind of unsettled outlook could the compromisers recapture the power of decision from the popular, revolutionary forum and restore the issues of debate to their deliberative phase within the Congress. The task was probably impossible, but during the long debate preceding organization of the Committee of Thirteen, it was scarcely attempted.

II

At ten o'clock on the morning of December 21, eleven members of the committee met for the first time. Seward was still at home in Auburn, New York, awaiting Thurlow Weed's return from a consultation with Lincoln at Springfield; Davis' place was not yet filled. The previous day, South Carolina's Sovereignty Convention had passed its ordinance of secession, further diminishing the possibility of compromise.

According to the committee's records the first meeting was devoted to "informal conversation,"[33] but there is reason to doubt that this description of procedures is accurate. Crittenden laid his plan for compromise before the committee and debate on its various articles followed. Reporters inferred from the "discussion" that the proposal had little chance of adoption.[34] Douglas promised to support whatever amendments to the Constitution seemed likely to take the slavery question out of Congress. The press reported that Bigler was preparing such a plan for submission at a later date.[35] In Seward's absence, Wade spoke for the Republicans, apparently delivering a précis of his earlier speech to the Senate.[36] Finally, "when the Republican Senators ignored all justification for the difficulties, and declared that they had no compromises to propose . . . Mr. Toombs charged upon the North all the responsibility for the disruption of the Government."[37] Thus ended the first meeting of the committee, which could hardly have lasted more than two hours.[38]

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[33] *Reports of the Committees of the Senate of the United States for the Second Session of the Thirty-Sixth Congress*, no. 288, "Journal of the Committee of Thirteen," p. 2 (hereafter cited as *Committee Reports*).

[34] New York *Herald*, Dec. 22, 1860.

[35] *The New York Times*, Dec. 22, 1860.

[36] The New York *Daily Tribune* (Dec. 22, 1860) reviewed Wade's remarks, calling them "a strong speech." The topics enumerated are much the same as those covered in Wade's speech to the Senate on Dec. 17.

[37] *The New York Times*, Dec. 22, 1860.

[38] The *Cong. Globe* (p. 172) indicates that Rice and Bigler spoke in the Senate im-

Though the details of these "conversations" are not fully known, three important inferences are suggested by the evidence available: (1) few, if any, topics that had not already been aired in the Senate were discussed; (2) committee members began immediately to debate "packaged" proposals instead of undertaking an informal search for areas of agreement upon which proposals might be built as discussion progressed; (3) members quickly adopted a pattern of formalized communication, with Wade and Toombs, at least, introducing the methods and spirit of parliamentary debate. Each of these procedures, unless counterbalanced, was certain to place psychological barriers between the committee and the discovery of new bases for deliberation and agreement.

Since the Senate did not meet on December 22, the Committee of Thirteen held its second and longest meeting on that day, nearly seven hours. All members except Seward were present. The committee began by adopting Jefferson Davis' motion that it report as adopted only those proposals "sustained by a majority of each of the two classes of senators of the committee; senators of the Republican party to constitute one class, and senators of the other parties to constitute the other class."[39] After adoption of this sensible rule, new proposals were received for subsequent discussion.

Crittenden's plan for compromise occupied the committee through most of its second meeting. The proposal consisted of propositions to be incorporated in the Constitution and recommendations for congressional legislation. The amendments would (1) divide present and future territories at latitude 36° 30′ and recognize slavery to the south but prohibit it north of that line; (2) prevent Congress from legislating against slavery in federal reservations within slave states; (3) deny Congress the power to abolish slavery in the District of Columbia so long as Virginia or Maryland permitted slavery, or to prevent federal officers from bringing their slaves into the district; (4) guarantee protection for interstate slave trade and transportation; (5) provide federal compensation for claimants whose slaves escaped seizure through popular aid, and empower the government to collect such funds from counties in which the escapees were aided; and (6) declare unalterable these and other constitutional provisions respecting slavery. The legislative actions aimed at (1) tightening and reaffirming the Fugitive Slave Law, (2) urging states to repeal questionable personal liberty laws and the like, (3) modifying the system of fee collection under the Fugitive Slave Law and limiting the responsibility of citizens to "hunt up" fugitive slaves, and (4) strengthening enforcement of laws against importation of slaves.[40]

These propositions were "discussed by every member present in short

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mediately upon the opening of business and that Powell was on the floor early in the meeting. Since the Senate convened at twelve o'clock, the committee must have adjourned near that hour.

[39] *Committee Reports*, p. 2.

[40] *Committee Reports*, pp. 3–4, 6–7.

speeches addressed to particular points and to various forms of amendment as they were offered."[41] Crittenden spoke of the blessings of the Union in a manner the Associated Press called "eloquent and sublime," and Bigler argued for the plan, saying that division of the territories was the best way of removing the slavery question from Congress. Douglas spoke for the plan, saying he was now ready to abandon his doctrine of popular sovereignty. He was, he said, unwilling to think that either side would sacrifice the country for political consistency or party gain. He also thrust sharply at the Republicans, observing that he did not think those who elected Lincoln "had decided irrevocably that they preferred disunion to yielding one iota of the extreme demands of their partizan platform."[42]

Crittenden and Douglas understood that Toombs and Davis were ready to accept the pending proposals as a full settlement,[43] but reporters and the Republicans had the impression Crittenden's plan was not *all* Davis and Toombs were asking. For one thing, the two Southerners continued to insist "that propositions must come from the dominant party, the Republicans."[44] Moreover, when the Republicans asked for further time to consider the plan (doubtless to hear Seward's report before acting), Toombs "forced a vote on each proposition separately."[45] There is also later testimony from Toombs, himself: "I said to the committee of thirteen and I say here, that, *with other satisfactory provisions*, I would accept it [Crittenden's plan]."[46] Altogether, it seems probable that Davis and Toombs were willing to accept the Crittenden scheme only if it were accompanied by evidence that Republicans would thereafter look upon slavery without hostility.

The Republicans were adamant. They refused to consider any settlement which extended slavery into both present and future southern territories. In consequence, Crittenden's proposed amendments were defeated by the votes of the Republicans, joined by Davis and Toombs in the vote on the first proposition. The legislative recommendations fared slightly better; the proposals to revise the Fugitive Slave Law and strengthen enforcement of the slave-importation laws were adopted unanimously. Crittenden's other suggestions were defeated by Republican votes.

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[41] New York *Daily Tribune*, Dec. 24, 1860.

[42] Minneapolis *Daily Minnesotian*, Dec. 29, 1860. The quoted language is the reporter's.

[43] See Douglas' speeches of Jan. 3 and Mar. 2, 1861 (*Cong. Globe*, 36th Cong., 2nd Sess., App. p. 41 and p. 1391). Samuel S. Cox (*Three Decades of Federal Legislation* [Providence, 1885], p. 77) said Crittenden told him he had asked Toombs whether "this compromise, as a remedy for all wrongs and apprehensions, be acceptable to you?" Toombs reportedly replied, "Not by a good deal; but my state will accept it, and I will follow my state."

[44] New York *Daily Tribune*, Dec. 24, 1860.

[45] The New York *Herald* (Dec. 24, 1860) carried a report of the request for more time, while *The New York Times* on the same date reported Toombs' demand for an immediate vote.

[46] Speech to the Senate, Jan. 7, 1861 (*Cong. Globe*, 36th Cong., 2nd Sess., p. 270); italics added.

Apparently the compromisers' arguments had, again, magnified the Union's spiritual importance and minimized slavery's moral aspects—"a mixing up of these questions with religion and politics," Crittenden later said. So doing, the centrists persuaded no secessionist save Hunter to modify his demands, while their suasions seemed insulting to the antislavery Republicans.

Before this meeting adjourned, Doolittle offered a resolution to guarantee trial by jury to "alleged" fugitives claiming they were not slaves. Toombs promptly moved to add "in the State from which he fled." All Republicans (Seward's vote was added later) opposed this amendment. Rice abstained, and the rest of the committee voted favorably. Next, Crittenden sought to weaken the motion further by adding, "but only in those cases where he shall have been out of the possession of the claimant for more than two years." The Republicans and Douglas opposed; Rice again abstained. There being a tie, the amendment lost. In the final vote on the resolution as amended by Toombs, only Crittenden, Bigler, and Grimes voted yes.[47]

The amendments by Toombs and Crittenden reflected the Democrats' mistrust of northern "justice" in matters concerning slaves, and this suspicion was fully reciprocated by the Republicans, as their votes on Toombs's amendment showed. After seven hours of debate and discussion attitudes remained as they had been before the committee was organized; those who approved slavery or were indifferent to it demanded legal presumptions in its favor, while the Republicans, who disapproved of the institution, insisted on legal presumptions against it. It was unrealistic to suppose that either side would capitulate unless it could be shown that something dearer than the Union, or property rights, or the justice of man to man was at stake.

When the committee adjourned even the optimists were despondent. Crittenden called the day "the darkest of his life," adding "that he was overwhelmed with solicitude for his country, and that nothing but the affection of the people for the Union can restore peace."[48] If any ray of hope for the committee's success remained, Robert Toombs now sought to shut it out. In a fiery telegram to his constituents in Georgia he declared there was now no hope except in secession:

> I came here to secure your constitutional rights or to demonstrate to you that you can get no guarantees for these rights from your Northern confederates.
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> . . . I submitted propositions, which so far from receiving decided support from a single member of the Republican party . . . were all treated with either derision or contempt. . . .

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[47] *Committee Reports*, pp. 7–8.

[48] *The New York Times*, Dec. 24, 1860. It is worth noting that Crittenden's observation suggests carrying the issues out of Congress to the people. In a letter to S. S. Nicholas, written sometime in December, Crittenden indicated that he had reluctantly concluded the issues could not be settled in Congress: "I fear that *party* cant [*sic*] rise to the greatness of the occasion. My hopes of a settlement are almost at an end. . . . I am willing to join in your proposal for a *convention* of Delegates from the States of Ky, Tennessee, & Missouri. It seems to me wise & politic & the best that remains to be done." (John J. Crittenden Papers, Library of Congress.)

> The committee is controlled by Black Republicans, your enemies, who only seek to amuse you with delusive hope until your election, in order that you may defeat the friends of secession. If you are deceived by them, it shall not be my fault. . . . I tell you upon the faith of a true man that all further looking to the North for security for your constitutional rights in the Union ought to be instantly abandoned. It is fraught with nothing but ruin to yourselves and your posterity.[49]

Unionists in Georgia, disturbed by Toombs's telegram, inquired of Crittenden and Douglas whether the end of discussion and compromise had indeed come. The reply they received bespoke, in forced optimism and vague counsel, the sickness of invention and hope: "In reply to your enquiry we have hopes that the rights of the South & of every State & Section may be protected in the Union. Don't give up the ship. Don't despair of the Republic. J. J. Crittenden & S. A. Douglas."[50]

In this spirit of gloom the committee held its third meeting on December 24. Seward had returned to Washington and all members were present. Douglas offered a joint resolution for later consideration, after which Seward presented a series of proposals based on advice Thurlow Weed had brought from Lincoln and on the wishes of the Republican committee members. Seward's account of the propositions and their disposition reads thus:

> With the unanimous consent of our section, I offered three propositions which seemed to me to cover the ground of the suggestion made by you, through Mr. Weed. . . . First. That the Constitution should never be altered, so as to authorize Congress to abolish, or interfere with slavery in the States. This was accepted. Second. That the Fugitive Slave law should be amended, by granting a jury trial to the fugitive. This, in opposition to our votes, was amended, so as to give the jury in the State from which the fugitive fled; and so amended, was voted down by our own votes.
>
> The committee had already agreed to Mr. Crittenden's amendment concerning the fees of the commissioner; making them the same, when the fugitive is returned to slavery, as when he is discharged. Our third resolution was, that Congress recommend to all the States, to revise their legislation, concerning persons recently resident in other States, and to repeal all such laws which contravene the Constitution . . . or any law of Congress in pursuance thereof. This was rejected by the pro-slavery vote of the committee.[51]

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[49] Telegram "To the People of Georgia," dated Washington, December 23, 1860 (*The Correspondence of Robert Toombs, Alexander H. Stephens, and Howell Cobb*, Ulrich B. Phillips, ed., American Historical Association, *Annual Report*, 1911 [Washington, 1913], II, 525). Despite Toombs's statement in the second paragraph above, the seven resolutions he submitted to the committee were not taken up for general consideration until Dec. 24; it may be, however, that they were commented on informally when submitted on Dec. 22.

[50] The telegrams of inquiry and reply are reproduced in a letter from Thomas S. Powell to Alexander H. Stephens dated Atlanta, Dec. 30, 1860 (Alexander H. Stephens Papers).

[51] Letter to Lincoln, Dec. 26, 1860 (Frederick W. Seward, *Seward at Washington, 1846–1861* [New York, 1891], pp. 484–485). Seward's report of the voting is at variance

Seward's proposals provided the committee with a new opportunity to define and study, for possibilities of enlargement, the areas of agreement between the partisans.[52] Republicans were ready to accept noninterference with slavery in the states. This offer was agreeable to the majority in each section of committee opinion and was one very small step toward settlement. By their second proposition the Republicans uselessly repeated a demand already denied; however, their third resolution accepted Crittenden's recommendation respecting the personal liberty laws if the recommendation were stripped of such phrases as "[the laws] have thereby contributed much to the discord and commotion now prevailing" and "mischievous purposes."[53] The effect of either resolution would have been exactly the same; either would have softened conditions complained of for hours in the Senate. But only Bigler and Crittenden supported this portion of the Crittenden plan when it came from Republican hands. Douglas did not vote.

With Seward's propositions disposed of, the remainder of the committee's third meeting and most of its fourth session were spent considering resolutions offered by Toombs and Davis—a procedure illustrating once again the rigid, formalistic pattern of deliberation to which the senators were committed. There was not the remotest possibility that these propositions would be accepted, nor could the spirit of compromise be served by debating them.

Toombs and Davis had submitted their resolutions on December 22. Toombs offered seven articles for incorporation in the Constitution; Davis offered a more general demand for the same guarantees. The tone and scope of the proposals are fairly represented by Davis' single article:

> *Resolved*, That it shall be declared, by amendment of the Constitution, that property in slaves, recognized as such by the local law of any of the States of the Union, shall stand on the same footing in all constitutional and federal relations as any other species of property so recognized; and, like other property, shall not be subject to be divested or impaired by the local law of any other State, either in escape thereto or of transit or sojourn of the owner therein; and in no case whatever shall such property be subject to be divested or impaired by any legislative act of the United States, or of any of the Territories thereof.[54]

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with the committee's journal and the report of the vote carried by the Associated Press. Both sources indicate that addition of "in the state from which he fled" to the second proposition was opposed by all Republicans except Wade, who did not vote, and by Toombs; these sources also show that the motion as amended was supported by Douglas and the five Republicans. It seems likely that the journal is in error. To think otherwise would be to assume Seward forgot his own vote and that three Republicans plus Bigler, Douglas, and Crittenden reversed the votes they had cast on the Doolittle resolution; see *Committee Reports*, pp. 7–8, 11.

[52] That they were offered chiefly "for the record" is suggested by Weed's statement to Lincoln: "[Seward] entirely concurs in the necessity of getting right in all respects, ourselves, and then of holding others to the duty of obeying the laws." (Letter from Albany, Dec. 23, 1860 [Robert Todd Lincoln Collection].)

[53] *Committee Reports;* see Crittenden's second resolution and Seward's third proposition, pp. 6, 11.

[54] *Committee Reports,* p. 3; for Toombs's proposed amendments see pp. 2–3.

The committee considered the first three of Toombs's propositions on December 24 and completed deliberation on both sets of resolutions at its fourth meeting, December 26. Since members could not agree on Crittenden's more moderate proposals, voting on those of Toombs and Davis was but a formality. The Republicans voted solidly against, Douglas abstained in each vote, and Crittenden joined the Republicans in opposing Davis' resolutions. All others cast favorable votes on each question.[55]

During the committee's fourth meeting Seward offered a new resolution urging "that Congress should pass a law to punish invasions of our States and conspirators to effect such invasions; but the latter only in the State and district where the acts of such complicity were committed."[56] Toombs moved to include "attempts to incite insurrection" and his amendment carried against the Republican votes. Douglas proposed to include, also, "conspiracies or combinations . . . with intent to invade, assail, or molest the government, inhabitants, property, or institutions of any other State or Territory." This amendment also carried against the votes of the Republicans, who reasoned that it was virtually a "revival of the old Sedition Law of John Adams' time."[57] Since, on a division of the question, only Toombs, Rice, and Wade opposed Seward's motion without amendments, it appears that in its unamended form Seward's resolution constituted a new point of agreement which the committee might well have tried to integrate with previous agreements on other topics of complaint. Apparently there was no such attempt.

In its third and fourth meetings, the committee had isolated several areas within which further inquiry might, just possibly, have produced those small marks of understanding and sympathy which must always be the prelude to comprehensive agreement. A majority of both "classes of Senators" agreed in whole or in part that (1) Congress had no power to interfere with slavery in the states, (2) the Fugitive Slave Law needed revision and strict enforcement, (3) Negroes claiming to be free were entitled to trial by jury if a way could be found to guarantee impartiality,[58] (4) stricter enforcement of laws against importing slaves was needed, (5) federal legislation should be enacted against invasions of the states in the manner of John Brown's raid, and (6) the states should review their personal liberty laws with a view to correcting or repealing any which were at odds with federal legislation. These agreements or near-agreements did not constitute a wholly satisfactory statement of sectional rights and privileges, but they covered several of the difficulties most loudly complained of on the Senate floor. True, the crucial problem of slavery in the territories was still in contention; but by making the most of the agreements so far isolated, the committee might have diminished the spirit of contention and created conditions of mind more hospitable to compromise. Instead, members grasped their failure surely and firmly, concentrated upon the inadequacies of their accomplishment, and despaired, or fed the spirit of conflict.

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[55] *Committee Reports*, pp. 11–13, 14. Some incidental amendments produced shifts in the alignment of votes, but the essential character of the voting was as described here.

[56] See Seward's letter to Lincoln, Dec. 26, 1860, (Seward, p. 484), and *Committee Reports*, p. 13.

[57] Seward to Lincoln, Dec. 26, 1860.

[58] It seems doubtful that Toombs would have agreed here; but a majority of both groups in the committee approved the proposition in principle.

Scarcely anyone supposed a fifth meeting of the committee could do more than clear the agenda. "Compromise has gone up the spout," wrote one observer; "the compromisers go about the street like mourners."[59] Another, writing to Lincoln, diagnosed one of the most important causes of failure: "Divers remedies have been suggested—but the misfortune is that every mover of one thinks that his is the only panacea—& therefore, hangs on to it."[60] To make matters worse, official Washington was in turmoil over news that Major Anderson had moved his forces from Fort Moultrie to Fort Sumter. Davis, Hunter, and W. H. Trescott met with the president on the twenty-seventh to demand that he order Anderson back to Fort Moultrie. Throughout the day confusion reigned in the Capitol. Even on the morning of the twenty-eighth it was not known whether President Buchanan would defy or bow to the demands of a seceding state.[61] In this moment of tension and confusion the committee held its fifth and final session—and came nearest to a successful compromise.

After considering two unacceptable proposals offered by Crittenden and Douglas,[62] the committee found in resolutions offered by Rice its nearest approach to compromise. The essential part of Rice's plan was as follows:

> That all territory lying north of 36° 30′ should be at once admitted into the Union as a State, upon an equal footing with the original States, and be called the "State of Washington;" and that all territory south of 36° 30′ should be also admitted as a State, upon an equal footing with the original States, and be called the State of Jefferson;" and in each case provision should be made that whenever any portion of said States shall contain, within an area of not less than sixty thousand square miles, one hundred and thirty thousand inhabitants, a new State may be formed and admitted into the Union, with such boundaries as Congress may prescribe.[63]

How narrow was the difference between Republican members and the compromisers appeared when Seward moved to insert into the description of the "State of Washington": "except so much of the Territory of Kansas as is contained in the proposed boundary of the Wyandot constitution." So modified, Rice's proposal could have "saved face" for both sides by guaranteeing the protection of state laws to slave property in existing southern territories and allowing the Republicans to claim a free Kansas in return for moderating their blanket disapproval of slavery. Kansas was to be the price of a truce on the issue of extending slavery.[64] But the non-Republicans were as unwilling to accept a settlement which failed to assure an expanding slavocracy as the Republicans were unwilling to permit such growth indefinitely. In the vote on Seward's amendment Bigler abstained, Douglas joined the Republicans in support, and all others were opposed. Without Seward's amendment Rice's plan won the support of only Rice, Davis, and Bigler.

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[59] Springfield *Daily Republican*, Dec. 28, 1860.

[60] R. W. Thompson to Lincoln, Dec. 25, 1860 (Robert Todd Lincoln Collection).

[61] See Nevins, II, 367–371, and Buchanan's message to the South Carolina commissioners (*Works of James Buchanan*, ed. John Bassett Moore [Philadelphia, 1910], II, 79–84).

[62] Crittenden's new plan would have restored the Missouri Compromise line and given federal sanction to slavery within the Territory of New Mexico. Douglas' proposals would have established popular sovereignty as the law of the land through constitutional amendment, denied suffrage to persons of the African race, permitted acquisition of new territory only by treaty or a vote of two-thirds of each house of Congress, extended the Fugitive Slave Law to the territories, and implemented several of the administrative and legislative requirements contained in Crittenden's first compromise plan. (*Committee Reports*, pp. 8–10, 14–15.)

[63] *Committee Reports*, pp. 17–18.

Upon the defeat of Rice's plan, the impetuous Toombs moved that the committee report its inability to agree and ask to be discharged. Seward, Collamer, Doolittle, Grimes, Bigler, Crittenden, and Douglas successfully voted down the request for discharge and forestalled an attempt to adjourn *sine die;* nonetheless, the senators' work was at an end. After meeting on December 31 to read and approve the journal, the Committee of Thirteen ceased to function.[65]

III

Like most great public debates, the controversy over slavery had gone through its phase of agitation, in which persuasion had been directed at arousing concern for slavery's ultimate influence upon other American institutions and, conversely, at decrying northern threats to southern interests. It had also passed through various deliberative stages, culminating in such great legislative and popular decisions as the Missouri Compromise, the Compromise of 1850, the separation of southern from Douglas Democrats, and, finally, the endorsement of the Republican platform by a large fraction of the electorate. To the more impassioned participants in the debate it seemed, in November and December of 1860, that the final decision obtainable in the forums of the Union had been taken. Republicans claimed a mandate from the people; the South saw its peculiar institution and its political power endangered; a final victory, and an equally final defeat, had been forged in the national tribunals.

But the vanquished could still choose between submission and appeal to a different authority, perhaps a sectional one. In December of 1860 the more impetuous Southerners were in the process of choosing the second course—they were carrying the issues out of the national councils and placing them before the voters of their states and their state conventions. As they did so, problems relating to slavery ceased to be topics of deliberation in Congress, for the national legislature was being stripped of its power of decision. In this situation those who still hoped for national unity faced a most difficult problem in strategy and rhetorical invention: they must, through action and the art of persuasion, rebuild confidence in legislative decisions and reestablish the issues as deliberative questions potentially resolvable within the halls of Congress.

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[64] A letter which Seward later wrote to Lincoln (Jan. 27, 1861) suggests that this was exactly the bargain he sought: "It is almost in vain that I tell them [the Southerners and border state representatives] to wait, let us have a truce on slavery, put our issue on disunion and seek remedies for ultimate griefs in a constitutional [convention?]." (Frederic Bancroft, *Life of William H. Seward* [New York, 1900], II, 30–31.)

[65] *Committee Reports*, pp. 18–19.

For years spokesmen for the South had been developing their theory of states' rights. Now their doctrine had become a thing more dear than the Union or peace itself. On their legal theses they rested their claim for the slaveholders' freedom to settle in the territories. But many in the North had, for an equal time, been evolving principles of political and social morality which ascribed total wickedness to the practice of human slavery. They had come to prize their scruple above the Union and above domestic tranquility; and they rested their opposition to slavery's expansion upon their moral doctrine. In such fashion the expansion of slavery into new domains became an issue of natural and constitutional right for one side and a question of morality for the other, and there was scarcely room for the seed of compromise to lie planted in the mind of any partisan.

No proposals offered in the name of national expediency or domestic peace could gain a patient hearing from men who had thus consciously set legal rights or moral scruples above national interest. Unless the partisans were made to believe they faced the loss of something even more precious than their legal rights or peace of conscience, there was little possibility of reopening legislative deliberation and then, perhaps, compromise. Rhetoric could break the deadlock only by demonstrating that sectional rights and political integrity would be better served through compromise than through action in defense of rights and scruples.

The Senate Committee of Thirteen which was created on April 10, 1850, and which, under the chairmanship of Henry Clay, produced the Compromise of 1850, was the model for establishing a second committee in 1860. True to the imitative spirit which touched its formation, the new committee aped the Senate in its deliberative procedures. It stifled exploratory impulses under the formality of unneeded parliamentary rules; its suggestions, resolutions, and plans were treated as "bills" to be adopted or rejected by recorded votes, but not, if we may judge from its journal and from public and private reports, to be informally examined, compared, combined, and expanded. The committee's mode of procedure and its accepted mode of discourse encouraged the processes of contention and debate rather than the processes of conciliation.

Whether wiser statesmen-rhetoricians-discussants, working by methods calculated to reveal and expand the grounds of potential agreement and the dangers of radical alternatives, might have succeeded in the Senate and the committee room cannot be known. There is, however, clear evidence that neither the arguments of debate nor the methods of decision-making in December, 1860, allowed a full, fair test of the case for compromise.

With monotonous regularity the men of the center extolled the glories of association and the nation's past, but they spoke little of practical considerations that might cause Republicans or seceders to reexamine their rosy visions of an independent slavocracy or a free-state empire for signs of unreality. Worse, most of those advocating compromise opened themselves to the charge of bias by their solicitude for slavery's respectability and by their depreciation of the Republicans' integrity. On the other side, Seward's half-hearted efforts, initially suspect, were weakened on the one hand by too much caution and on the other by too much faith in the healing powers of time. In Douglas' hands, perhaps, lay the greatest opportunity; yet he, too, beat ineffectually against ideological and legal conceptions with vague praise for unity and biting charges of partisan bigotry.

It would be absurd to suggest that failures of rhetorical analysis and invention caused the December efforts at compromise to miscarry, but it is difficult to see how success could have come in the face of such inefficacies. Few available means of creating a desire for agreement were ever used in the Senate or in the Committee of Thirteen. Was the uncompromising spirit of Republicans and Southerners truly unbreakable? We cannot tell, for that spirit was never tested against the strongest instruments men could bring to bear upon it.

The Secession Debate in Georgia, November, 1860–January, 1861

N. B. Beck

20

The role of discussion and debate in determining the decision of a state to secede from the Union is illustrated by what happened in Georgia from November, 1860, through January, 1861. The states preceding Georgia into secession were swept by well-organized separatist movements; those following Georgia were influenced largely by mounting pressures of northern threats and by southern ties. Georgians were almost equally divided on secession and were less subject to outside influence than citizens of neighboring states. Thus in Georgia the secession campaign affords a clearer picture of the relative importance of oral persuasion as a factor influencing an important political action than in other southern states.[1]

Georgia was also especially significant because of her leadership among the southern states. The most prosperous of the cotton states, she was industrializing more rapidly than her southern sisters. Her political leaders commanded large followings throughout the South and, with few exceptions, were better known throughout the nation than any others. "As Georgia goes, so goes the South," boasted her orators.[2]

The Georgia secession debate of 1860–1861 climaxed three decades of debates between radical states' rights men and conservative unionists. The audience for the debate was in reality four audiences: (1) the immediate group, members of the legislature and delegates to the State convention; (2) the voting citizens of the state, many of whom had heard the debaters before, and many more who followed the debate in their newspapers;[3] (3) citizens of other southern states, anxiously awaiting Georgia's decision; (4) the largest interested body of hundreds of thousands throughout the northern states whose attention was focused on the Georgia arena. Major concern is with the first two of these audiences. To understand them the economic, social, and political background which formed their attitudes toward slavery and secession must be considered.

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[1] Percy Scott Flippin, *Herschel V. Johnson of Georgia: State Rights Unionist* (Richmond, 1931), p. 152; E. M. Coulter, *The Confederate States of America, 1861–1865* (Baton Rouge, 1950), pp. 2–4; William B. Hesseltine, *The South in American History* (New York, 1943), pp. 377–379.

[2] Atlanta *Confederacy*, Nov. 27, 1860; Philip J. Green, "Secession in Georgia, 1860–1861," *Univ. of North Dakota Quart. Jour.*, XVII (1927), 251–252; Arthur C. Cole, *The Irrepressible Conflict* (New York, 1934), p. 66.

[3] The state-wide audience for the great debate was well informed. Despite the large percentage of illiteracy in northern Georgia and the few schools in the southcentral pine barrens, those who could not read "kept up with politics by attending court and public

By 1860, slavery was so intertwined in Georgia's economic and social structure that the institution had the firm support of the great majority of the citizens. Only Virginia had more slaves and slave-owners than Georgia. According to the 1860 census, more than 41,000 of the 118,000 white families in Georgia owned a total of 462,000 slaves, whose value surpassed that of all the land in the state. Although sixty-six percent of the slaveholders owned fewer than ten each, the small farmers were as zealous as the wealthy planters in defending their right to slave property. Many city dwellers and slaveless farmers rented Negro servants and laborers from owners who had a surplus, and it was claimed that most of the 15,000 farmers without slave labor hoped to own Negroes eventually. The stigma attached to competing with free Negro labor, keenly felt by white mechanics, reinforced the approval of slavery by nonslaveholding Georgians. Another factor reinforcing the institution was fear of an abolitionist-inspired Negro insurrection, a fear that John Brown's raid greatly intensified. The state slave population was more than four-fifths the number of whites, and in many counties Negroes outnumbered whites. A fourth factor was the argument advanced by Thomas R. R. Cobb in 1858, that emancipating the Negro would present the insoluble problem of what to do with him. A fifth was the widespread use of Biblical justifications of slavery, which profoundly impressed the religious, slaveless whites. All of these factors combined to produce that curious anomaly of Georgia ante-bellum politics: the large followings of the planter-politicians among those too poor to own slaves.[4]

In 1860 the idea of secession was not new to Georgians. The great majority of them were strict constructionists, firmly believing that the federal Constitution was a contract between sovereign states, each retaining the right to withdraw if the contract were violated by the other signatories. They also believed that disputes between North and South could still be settled without breaking the compact. On the other hand, the southern rights partisans

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barbecues, where they were addressed by their leaders." See Zachary T. Johnson, *The Political Policies of Howell Cobb* (Nashville, 1929), pp. 77–78, and George G. Smith, *The Story of Georgia and the Georgia People, 1732–1860* (Macon, 1900), pp. 233, 298, 304, 307. In addition, Georgia had more newspapers than any other state in the Deep South; its 105 papers in 1860 had a combined circulation of 180,972. See Rabun L. Brantley, *Georgia Journalism in the Civil War Period* (Nashville, 1929), pp. 12–13, and Coulter, p. 493.

[4] Ralph Betts Flanders, *Plantation Slavery in Georgia* (Chapel Hill, N.C., 1933), pp. 82–83, 127, 203–208; Ulrich B. Phillips, "Georgia and State Rights," American Historical Association, *Annual Report for 1901* (Washington, 1902), pp. 107, 153, 185, 189; Johnson, pp. 77–78.

in Georgia had preached nullification in the 1830s, attempted to secede in 1850, and in 1860 were girded for the debate with augmented forces and new arguments.[5]

The Georgian's belief in the right of secession had its roots in love of home, spirit of democracy, rugged individualism, and the extreme self-reliance resulting from his way of life. Most voting Georgians of 1860 were familiar with the hardships of a frontier civilization. Farmers and planters alike frequently worked in the fields with their slaves; social distinctions were neither drastic nor clearly defined. It was only natural to resent northern interference with what they considered local problems and to rely on states' rights for the solution.[6]

The individualism that characterized Georgians' economic and social life was reflected in their politics. Party alignments shifted whenever local groups became dissatisfied with the policies of their national organizations. Many of the state's political leaders–who were principal debaters in the secession campaign of 1860–1861–had by then reversed their earlier positions on secession. Before 1830 the major political factions in the state were the personal followings of their respective leaders. When disapproval of Jackson's threat to suppress South Carolina's attempt to nullify the tariff caused the states' rights group to align with Jackson's enemies in the Whig party, the Unionists moved into the Democratic camp.

The battle over the Compromise of 1850 caused another change of party alignments. Many Whigs who objected to the compromise joined radical Democrats in forming a new Southern Rights party. Moderate Democrats joined Whig leaders in organizing a new short-lived Constitutional Union party. The governor's call for a state convention to decide Georgia's policy on the compromise led to a bitter campaign for the election of delegates, and the Unionists won by approximately 42,000 to 24,000 votes. The Southern Rights party carried fewer than twenty of the state's ninety-three counties.[7]

This convention adopted the famous Georgia Platform, frequently quoted in the 1860–1861 secession debate. The document declared that the Union was secondary to the principles upon which it was founded; that, as the Union had been formed through mutual concessions of the thirteen states, so Georgia now would concede to accept the compromise, but would resist attempts to abolish slavery in the District of Columbia, to suppress slave traffic between slave states, to prevent the admission of new slave states, or to nullify Fugitive Slave Laws.[8]

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[5] Horace Montgomery, *Cracker Parties* (Baton Rouge, 1950), p. 27; Phillips, p. 193.

[6] Joseph Le Conte, *Autobiography* (New York, 1903), pp. 22–24; George G. Smith, *The Story of Georgia and the Georgia People, 1732–1860* (Macon, 1900), pp. 233, 298, 304, 307; Arthur C. Cole, *The Whig Party in the South* (Washington, 1913), p. 56; Phillips, pp. 107–108.

[7] Savannah *Georgian*, Nov. 29, 1850, and Milledgeville *Federal Union*, Dec. 3, 10, 1850, in Montgomery, pp. 32–33; Phillips, pp. 163–167; Cole, *Whig Party*, p. 181; Johnson, pp. 77–78, 90–99; Richard H. Shryock, *Georgia and the Union in 1850* (Philadelphia, 1926), pp. 253, 311–313, 349; John E. Holland, "Union Sentiment in Georgia and Alabama from 1850 to Secession," unpub. thesis (Univ. of Chicago, 1936), pp. 2, 3, 5.

In the following year the Constitutional Union party again defeated the Southern Rightists by electing Howell Cobb governor with an 18,592 vote majority, and capturing six of Georgia's eight congressional seats. Although this campaign doomed the Southern Rights party, it may well have paved the way for a secessionist victory in 1861 through the thorough indoctrination in secession theory it gave the voters.[9] After this second defeat, Herschel V. Johnson and his Southern Rights colleagues reorganized the temporarily defunct Democratic party, while A. H. Stephens and Robert Toombs led most of the Unionists back to the Whig fold. In 1853 Johnson, the regenerated Democrat, defeated Charles J. Jenkins, Unionist-Whig, for the governorship by five hundred votes. In 1854, Toombs and Stephens found themselves aligned with northern Democrats in the congressional fight over the Kansas-Nebraska Bill, which was opposed by northern Whigs. Alarmed by the abolitionist trend of the national Whig party, they and many other influential Georgia Whigs turned reluctantly toward the Democratic ranks, which Howell Cobb had joined two years before. Most of the rank-and-file Whigs, led by Jenkins and Eugenius A. Nisbet, joined the new American, or Know-Nothing, party, of which young Benjamin H. Hill was emerging as the Georgia leader.[10]

The nomination of Fillmore as presidential candidate of the American party in 1856 disgusted Jenkins and Nisbet and many other former Whigs, who deserted to the Democratic party, which carried Georgia by a majority of 14,000 votes. The following year Joseph E. Brown, a Democratic dark horse, defeated Ben Hill, the American party candidate for governor, by 57,000 to 46,000 votes. Two years later Brown was reelected by a much greater margin, 63,644 to 42,103. The Dred Scott decision had destroyed the American party's chief campaign argument in Georgia, that the Supreme Court was antislavery.[11]

In a speech at Griffin, Georgia, on July 14, 1859, Senator Alfred Iverson predicted the election of a "Free Soil" president in 1860 and advised the formation of an independent confederacy of slave states. A few months later Governor Brown urged Georgians to strike for independence if the national Democratic party was disrupted and southern rights were denied.[12]

The break in the national Democratic party over the choice of a presidential candidate in 1860 split the party in Georgia. Toombs joined the

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[8] Montgomery, p. 34; Phillips, p. 165. An interesting firsthand account of the convention is given in Richard H. Shryock, *Letters of Richard D. Arnold, M.D.* (Durham, N.C., 1929), pp. 40–50.

[9] Montgomery, pp. 41–42, 43 *n.;* Shryock, *Georgia,* p. 356; Johnson, pp. 117–118.

[10] H. J. Pearce, Jr., *Benjamin H. Hill: Secession and Reconstruction* (Chicago, 1928), p. 38; Phillips, pp. 168–170, 178–179; Montgomery, pp. 90, 126–159.

[11] Phillips, pp. 178–182; Montgomery, pp. 155–156, 176, 183, 201, 227.

[12] Phillips, pp. 182–188; Montgomery, p. 235.

Southern Rights faction to support Breckinridge for president. A. H. Stephens and many former Whigs and Unionists declared for Douglas, who had Herschel V. Johnson as his running mate. Other Democrats rallied around Ben Hill and the remnants of the American party in support of Bell. The election results in Georgia gave Breckinridge 51,893 votes, Bell 42,855, and Douglas 11,580.[13] The Democratic split throughout the South assured the election of the Republican candidate, and the fear of abolitionists seizing control of the federal government rekindled the smoldering fire for secession.

Stephens wrote to a friend on October 13, 1860, that the people were awakening to the issues, and that, although he had no hopes for a Douglas victory in Georgia, he did hope to defeat the seceders.[14] If the combined vote for Bell and Douglas in Georgia can be considered as a vote for the Union, there was a majority of at least 2500 against secession. Robert Toombs was quoted as saying before he resigned from the Senate that ninety percent of the people of Georgia preferred to remain in the Union.[15] Edmund Ruffin, the hotheaded Virginia secessionist who visited Georgia in the fall of 1860 soon left in disgust when he found prospects for radical action poor. On the other hand, H. J. Pearce, Jr. and U. B. Phillips noted that mass meetings were adopting resolutions about the legitimacy of secession and that "every outspoken man in Georgia was in favor of resistance to the North."[16]

If the state-wide audience was confused in its attitude, its representatives in the state legislature were equally so. "The members were wavering, confused, without a plan and almost without a policy," declared Johnson.[17]

Demands increased for a state convention or a conference of delegates from southern states to determine future policy. Only a year earlier John Brown's raid had provoked a resolution by the legislature that Georgia held "herself ready to enter into any concert of action with the sister Southern states, which will secure their common rights . . . in the Union, or if that be no longer possible, their independence and security out of it."[18] Now, as the legislature began its 1860 session, the Augusta *Daily Constitutionalist* of November 3 called for a state convention of delegates elected by counties.[19]

The authorization of a state convention was strongly recommended on November 7, 1860, by Governor Joseph E. Brown. Calling for immediate action, he predicted that "if the fifteen Southern states should . . . determine to secede, . . . there would be no bloodshed." He said that northern labor would prevent war because of its dependence on southern cotton for employment and that Great Britain would fight before she would permit a single crop of cotton to be cut off from her mills. Reiterating the "compact theory" of the federal Constitution, broken by northern refusals to deliver fugitive slaves, he asked the legislature to authorize him to make reprisals on the citizens and property of offending states within the boundaries of Georgia.[20]

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[13] I. W. Avery, *History of Georgia, 1850–1881* (New York, 1881), pp. 129–131; Phillips, p. 191; Montgomery, pp. 238–241.

[14] *The Correspondence of Robert Toombs, Alexander H. Stephens, and Howell Cobb*, Ulrich B. Phillips, ed., American Historical Association, *Annual Report*, 1911 (Washington, 1913), II, 502.

[15] Avery, p. 153.

[16] Avery O. Craven, *Edmund Ruffin, Southerner* (New York, 1932), p. 199; Pearce, p. 47; Phillips, p. 196; Montgomery, p. 242.

[17] Flippin, p. 155, quoting Johnson's manuscript autobiography, pp. 150–152.

[18] Avery, pp. 106–107.

[19] Dwight L. Dumond, ed., *Southern Editorials on Secession* (New York, 1931), p. 210.

Governor Brown's personal popularity added weight to his message. A poor boy, he had paid for his schooling by day labor, graduated from the Yale University Law School, and previously served as state senator and circuit judge. He was known as "the common man's governor," and was the only governor of Georgia to serve eight consecutive years.[21]

The effect of the governor's message was augmented by the news of Republican victory: "We shall . . . have trouble," Stephens wrote to a friend November 8. "The people here are taken greatly by surprise at the result [Lincoln's election]. They thought I was only indulging in unnecessary apprehension when I told them months ago how it would most probably be."[22] Mass meetings were held in more than forty counties for the adoption of resolutions, many seconding the governor's recommendations, while some advocated immediate secession and others pleaded against hasty action. Military companies met to tender their services to the governor, business was interrupted, and money was locked up.[23]

The alarm of the citizenry was reflected in the legislature which was loath to adopt a definite policy without outside counsel. Accordingly, it invited eighteen of the most prominent political leaders of the state to advise it on the proper course of action. Of the eighteen, those who played the most important roles were Thomas R. R. Cobb, Robert Toombs, Alexander H. Stephens, and Ben Hill. Herschel V. Johnson was invited to speak, but declined. "All the leaders of Breckinridge democracy were there . . . rampant for secession," he declared in his autobiography.[24]

Cobb opened the debate for the secessionists with a fiery speech on November 12. The younger brother of former Governor Howell Cobb, Secretary of the Treasury in Buchanan's cabinet, Thomas Cobb previously had devoted himself to the legal profession. He had been a Unionist in the battle against secession in 1850–1851, but by 1860 he had recanted his earlier unionism and had become, as A. H. Stephens put it, "enlisted, soul and body, in the cause of secession."[25]

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[20] Allen D. Candler, ed., *The Confederate Records of the State of Georgia* (Atlanta, 1909), I, 19–57; Albert Berry Saye, *Constitutional History of Georgia* (Athens, Ga., 1948), pp. 227–228; Phillips, pp. 194–195.

[21] Montgomery, pp. 193–249.

[22] Phillips, ed., *Correspondence of Toombs, et al.*, p. 502.

[23] Dumond, pp. 232–233; Flippin, pp. 152–153.

[24] Flippin, pp. 152, 155–158, quoting Johnson's manuscript autobiography, pp. 152–153. He did, however, play an important part in the state convention in January, 1861.

Beginning with a disclaimer of any pretensions to political sagacity, Cobb urged the audience to bury the dead political parties and personal animosities and, "as Georgia's sons . . . take counsel together, how we shall avenge her wrongs, promote her prosperity, and preserve her honor."[26] He said the issue was simply: "Is the election of Lincoln a sufficient ground for the dissolution of the Union?"

Cobb then attacked the legality of Lincoln's election. Lincoln would have been legally elected, Cobb claimed, if none of the states casting electoral votes for him had nullified a constitutional act of Congress, but since many of those states had nullified the Fugitive Slave Laws, Georgia had the privilege of declaring their electoral votes illegal and the election unconstitutional.

Furthermore, he charged, the election was unconstitutional because those states had violated the intent of the framers of the constitution in four respects: (1) More than four northern states had extended the suffrage to free Negroes, despite the Supreme Court ruling that Negroes were not citizens. (2) Lincoln was the choice of a minority sectional party, and Cobb quoted the warning in George Washington's Farewell Address against "such a perversion of the government." (3) There was violation of the six objects for which the Constitution was adopted: "to form a more perfect Union, establish peace, ensure domestic tranquillity, provide for the common defense, promote the general welfare, and secure the blessings of liberty to ourselves and our posterity."

"I call your attention to only two of these objects—the ensuring of domestic tranquillity, and the securing of the blessings of liberty," Cobb said. He then played on the greatest fear of his auditors:

> Recur with me to the parting moment when you left your firesides, to attend your public duties at the Capital. Remember the trembling hand of a loved wife, as she whispered her fear from the incendiary and the assassin. Recall the look of indefinable dread with which the little daughter inquired when your returning footsteps should be heard. And if there be manhood in you, tell me if this is the domestic tranquillity which this "glorious Union" had achieved. . . . Take up your daily papers, and see the reports of insurrections in every direction. Hear the telegram read which announces another John Brown raid. Hear, as I did this day, that within seven miles of this Capital, a gang of slaves have revolted from their labor, declaring themselves free by virtue of Lincoln's election, and say that such fruits as these grow on the good tree of domestic tranquillity. A discontented few here and there will become the incendiary or the poisoner, when instigated by the unscrupulous emissaries of the Northern Abolitionists, and you and I

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[25] Flippin, p. 155 *n.;* Flanders, pp. 292–294; Phillips, p. 185; Phillips, *The Life of Robert Toombs* (New York, 1913), p. 199; Candler, I, 157; Alexander H. Stephens, *A Constitutional View of the Late War Between the States* (Philadelphia, 1870), II, 333–334.

[26] This speech is given in full in Candler, I, 157–182.

> cannot say that your home and your family may be the first to greet your returning footsteps in ashes or in death.—What has given impulse to these fears, and aid and comfort to those outbreaks now, but the success of the Black Republicans—the election of Abraham Lincoln?

As for liberty, he continued, the Union gives Georgians only the liberty to be robbed of their property, to be vilified in grog-shops and Congress, to be deprived of a voice in the presidential election. "And the election of Lincoln," he declared, "is the . . . Magna Carta securing to us these wonderful privileges." (4) Finally, there was the exclusion of the South from equality with northern states in the protection of life, liberty, and property. He concluded this part of his speech by stating that since the election of Lincoln thus violated the spirit of the Constitution, it was unconstitutional.

Cobb then turned to the political aspect, which he described as much more important than the legal. The unconstitutional election of a president did not in itself justify secession, he admitted, if the problems it presented were temporary and not vital. But, he declared, the "triumph of Black Republicanism" was vital and not temporary, and he reviewed the history of antislavery agitation as evidence of the permanence of the issue. "What then is our remedy?" he asked. "Marvel not then that I say my voice is for *immediate*, unconditional secession."

He then discussed the arguments advanced by antisecessionists: that Lincoln might betray his party, that the Senate could refuse to confirm Lincoln's appointments, that Lincoln would be powerless because the South would control both houses of Congress, and that the South should await an overt act by the North before seceding. All these, he argued, would mean delay, which would be dangerous for four reasons: (1) it would permit attack because the administration controlled the army and navy; (2) it would keep southern territory open to troublemaking Northerners; (3) it would imprison the South within a tight ring of free states, with the ultimate result that the rapidly growing number of slaves would crowd the whites out of the limited area of the slave states; and (4) it would promote civil war. By immediate secession alone could peace be preserved, he declared, concluding with this dire prediction and appeal:

> When the dogs of war first lap the blood of freedom, what will be the consequences? I think I see in the future the gory head rise above our horizon. Its name is Civil War. Already I can see the prints of his bloody fingers upon our lintels and door posts. The vision sickens me already, and I turn your view away. Oh! Georgians, avert from your state this bloody scourge. Surely your love of the Union is not so great but that you can offer it on the altar of fraternal peace. Come then, legislators, wait not till the grog-shops and cross-roads shall send up a discordant voice from a divided people, but act as leaders, in guiding and forming public opinion. Speak no uncertain words, but let your united voice go forth to be resounded from every mountain top and echoed from every gaping valley; let it be written in the rainbow, . . . and read in the crest of every wave upon

our ocean shores, until it shall put a tongue in every bleeding wound of Georgia's mangled honor which shall cry to Heaven for "Liberty or Death!"

On the following night Robert Toombs addressed the Assembly. A wealthy planter, Toombs had devoted himself to the law and public service, including five years in the state legislature, from 1844 to 1853 in the House and from 1853 to 1861 in the Senate. He had worked with Stephens and Howell Cobb to defeat the secessionists in the 1850 and 1851 campaigns, and supported the Kansas-Nebraska Bill; but the failure of Kansas to adopt a proslavery constitution, the John Brown raid, and the increasing demands of abolitionists were severe blows to his faith in a peaceful settlement. As a result, he campaigned for Breckinridge in 1860 and appeared before the Georgia legislature as the outstanding leader of the secessionists.[27]

Toombs was known not only in Georgia, but throughout the nation, as a forceful and eloquent speaker, with the physical presence to lend authority to his utterances. A contemporary reporter characterized his oratory as "instantaneous, overwhelming, and unyielding . . . an engulfing stream of impetuous force with a roar of thunder," which swept the audience "with a hurricane of thought and magnetic example."[28]

Toombs began with a review of the South's grievances against the North. He sketched the conditions under which the federal Constitution was adopted and asserted that, while southern statesmen had been national in their efforts, northern congressmen had consistently striven for sectional advantage. He cited northern attempts at territorial restriction of slavery and violations of fugitive slave laws. Reverting to Cobb's theme of the night before, Toombs exclaimed, "Oh, what a glorious Union, especially 'to secure domestic tranquillity'!"

Arguing that the North had consistently benefited at the expense of the South, Toombs stressed three evils which he declared could not be corrected in the Union. First were the fishing bounties, from which, he declared, the North received all the rewards. Next was the tariff which protected northern industry at the expense of southern buyers. The navigation laws, which favored northern shipping, constituted the third evil. These were designed to keep the South in financial subjection to the North, and there was no hope of relief under the present federal government, Toombs said.

He declared: "The time has come to redress these wrongs, and avert even greater evils." Whereas in the past, he explained, the northern sectionalists had carried on this undeclared warfare against the South by individual and state action, because they lacked control of the federal executive and judicial branches, now the North had vastly more power because it had captured the executive department, and the South could fear bolder infringements of her rights:

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[27] Phillips, *Toombs*, p. 178.

[28] Edward K. Graham, ed., *The South in the Building of the Nation* (Richmond, 1909), IX, 62.

> They will have possession of the Federal executive with its vast power, patronage, prestige of legality, its army, its navy, and its revenue; on the fourth of March next. Hitherto it has been on the side of the Constitution and right; after the fourth of March it will be in the hands of your enemy. Will you let him have it? Then strike while it is yet today. Withdraw your sons from the army, the navy, and every department of the Federal service. Keep your own taxes in your own coffers—buy arms with them and throw the bloody spear into this den of incendiaries and assassins, and let God defend the right. . . . Nothing but ruin will follow delay. . . . Twenty years of labor and toil and taxes all expended upon preparation would not make up for the advantage your enemies would gain if the rising sun on the fifth of March should find you in the Union. Then strike, strike while it is yet time.

After blistering denunciations of northern intentions to violate southern rights, he compared the situation facing Georgia to that facing the colonies in 1776. He exhorted the legislators to follow the example of their forefathers by seceding from the parent country. His peroration is said to have rung like thunder: "My countrymen, 'if you have nature in you, bear it not.' Withdraw yourselves from such a confederacy; it is your right to do so, your duty to do so. I know not why the Abolitionists should object to it, unless they want to torture you and plunder you. If they resist this great sovereign right, make another war of independence, for that will then be the question; fight its battles over again; reconquer liberty and independence."

Drawing himself to his full height and flinging out his right arm, he threw out the challenge: "Will you submit to Abolition rule, or will you resist? I ask you to give me a sword, for if you do not give it to me, as God lives, I will take it myself!"[29]

Stephens was the first of the invited speakers to reply to the secessionists. When he rose to speak on the night of November 14, his prestige with the audience was almost as great as that of his friend Toombs. Like Toombs, a noted lawyer, Stephens also had had a long career of distinguished public service, including six years in the state legislature before his election to Congress in 1843. In the House, his influence, eloquence, and skill in debate were widely admired and feared, as Abraham Lincoln, Horace Greeley, and many other competent judges of the time have amply testified.[30] With Toombs,

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[29] Although quotations from this speech are in various histories and biographies, the complete speech is found only in a pamphlet printed in Milledgeville, Ga., in 1860, entitled *Speech of Hon. Robert Toombs, delivered in Milledgeville on Tuesday, Nov. 13, 1860, before the Legislature of Georgia,* available, so far as is known, only at the Library of Congress. See Phillips, *Toombs,* pp. 200–203; Louis B. Pendleton, *Alexander H. Stephens* (Philadelphia, 1908), p. 158.

[30] Horace Greeley, *The American Conflict* (Hartford, 1864) I, 191, 234, and *Recollections of a Busy Life* (New York, 1873), p. 227; John G. Nicolay, *A Short Life of Abraham Lincoln* (New York, 1930), p. 77; Ovando J. Hollister, *Life of Schuyler Colfax* (New York, 1886), p. 135; Adlai E. Stevenson, *Something of Men I Have Known* (Chicago, 1909), p. 30; Walter F. McCaleb, ed., *Memoirs of John H. Reagan* (New York, 1906), p. 107; Shryock, *Arnold,* p. 79; Flippin, pp. 112, 119.

Stephens had organized the Whig party in Georgia and helped defeat the secession movement in 1850–1851. A moving force in the passage of the Kansas-Nebraska Bill, he had campaigned for its author, Douglas, for president. Stephens himself had been seriously considered both as a presidential and as a vice-presidential nominee. Now he faced the Assembly, torn between two pressures, his love for the Union and his loyalty to his state. Nevertheless, he had resolved to do what he could to prevent or delay secession by Georgia.[31]

In appearance, Stephens presented a strange contrast to the leonine Toombs, who sat beside him on the platform. A lifelong invalid, Stephens weighed only about one hundred pounds and was so emaciated that he appeared to Congressman Justin Morrill "a living skeleton." His shrill soprano voice was reported to reach farther than that of any other Georgia orator. He usually began calmly, in a high, almost feminine pitch, which became ringing as he proceeded, and approached sonority as he drew into his peroration. His utterance gained in vehemence and rapidity, his drawn, sallow face grew slightly flushed, and his right arm was repeatedly raised and flung sharply down as his rapidly marshaled evidence and argument marched toward their goal.[32]

In an attempt to calm the excitement kindled by the fiery outbursts of Cobb and Toombs, Stephens began conversationally. After stating that the question of the government under which one lives is of supreme importance, he said: "My object is not to stir up strife, but to allay it; not to appeal to your passions, but to your reason. Let us, therefore, reason together."

He advised against secession "in consequence of the election of Mr. Lincoln," because resistance to the constitutional election of a president would put the South in the wrong. "Let the fanatics of the North break the Constitution if such is their fell purpose," he declared. "Let the responsibility be upon them . . . but let us not be the ones to commit the aggression." He attacked the fears expressed by preceding speakers that the new administration's future actions would further harm the South. "Let us not anticipate a threatened evil," he warned; "the President of the United States is no emperor. . . . He can do nothing, unless backed by power in Congress." He then submitted figures showing that in the last election Democratic strength had increased in Congress to the extent that Lincoln would be powerless in the appointment of his cabinet.

Taking up the objection that no true man could conscientiously hold office under Lincoln, Stephens asked if any man should refuse an appointment given him by a Democratic Senate. Here Toombs interrupted with the remark: "If the Senate was Democratic, it was for Breckinridge." Stephens replied, "Well, then, I apprehend that no man could be justly considered untrue to the interests of Georgia . . . to hold an office which a Breckinridge Senate had given him, even though Mr. Lincoln should be President." No man "not true to the Constitution" could be appointed to a federal post, if "Southern Senators are true to their trust," he declared.

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[31] Pendleton, p. 150; Phillips, ed., *Correspondence of Toombs, et al.*, pp. 487, 488, 494, 498, 502.

[32] Numerous reports of Stephens' delivery are available, among them W. H. Milburn, *Ten Years of Preacher Life, or Chapters from an Autobiography* (New York, 1859), pp. 127–131; W. B. Parker, *The Life and Public Services of Justin Smith Morrill* (Boston, 1924), p. 71; John C. Reed, "Reminiscences of Ben Hill," *South Atlantic Quart.*, V (1906), 146; Graham, IX, 52.

Affirming his belief in the abstract right of secession and his conviction that Georgia's rights might still be maintained in the Union, he praised the federal government as "nearer the object of all good governments than any other on the face of this earth." At this point Toombs interrupted again, with a statement that England was better. "England, my friend says," Stephens answered. "Well, that is the next best, I grant; but I think we have improved upon England."

He then attacked Toombs's argument that the South's suffering from the fishing bounties, the tariff, and the navigation laws could not be redressed in the Union. The bounties, Stephens explained, were inaugurated to build up our navy and since then had been largely responsible for many naval victories. He stated his opinion that such bounties were no longer needed and, turning to Toombs, he urged the Senator to return to Washington and persuade Congress to repeal the bounties. As for the tariff, Stephens said that the whole southern delegation and Massachusetts congressmen alike had voted for it. Here Toombs interjected that this tariff had lessened the duties, and Stephens again capitalized on the interruption: "Yes, and Massachusetts, with unanimity, voted with the South to lessen them, and they were made just as low as Southern men asked them to be . . . If reason and argument, with experience, produced such changes in the sentiments of Massachusetts from 1832 to 1857, on the subject of the tariff, may not like changes be effected there by the same means . . . on the present vexed question!" Taking up Toombs's condemnation of the navigation laws, Stephens argued that these had proved of great value in building up the American merchant marine and that Toombs's effort to have them repealed had met little favor in the South. He took advantage of Toombs's admission that for forty-eight years of its history the federal government had been led by southern presidents to show that these had approved the navigation laws and the fishing bounties.

But, he continued, even if these grievances were admitted to be evils, did they outweigh the innumerable advantages the South had enjoyed under the federal government? The government had given peace, promoted foreign trade, and cleared the coasts of pirates. The benefits of the federal government were like oxygen in the air we breathed; as the withdrawal of oxygen from the air would produce appalling changes, so would removal of the influence of the federal government. He cited the fall of Greece and Rome when their institutions of government were destroyed, and asked the audience if similar results would not follow the disruption of American institutions.

He pointed to Georgia's wealth and her high position in the American commonwealth. He reminded his auditors that many Georgians had contemplated secession in 1850, but that the state had stayed in the Union, with the result that her taxable property had almost doubled in ten years. "Have we any assurance that, had we regarded the earnest, but misguided patriotic advice . . . of that day, and disrupted the ties that bind us to the Union, we would have advanced as we have?" he asked, and added, "I think not. Well, then, let us be careful now, before we attempt any rash experiment of this sort." He then developed an analogy with Adam and Eve in Eden and a similar temptation. "They were led to believe that their condition would be bettered . . . that they would become as Gods," he declared. "They, in an evil hour yielded—instead of becoming Gods, they only saw their own nakedness!" For Georgians, "instead of becoming Gods, we will become demons, and at no distant day commence cutting one another's throats."

Georgia should not act "hastily, or ill-temperedly," Stephens advised, but should negotiate with the North to the extent that the federal government would negotiate with a foreign country that had violated some agreement. He urged that a state convention be called to determine the will of the people, then delegates from all southern states should be sent to a conference, which would, in turn, present a list of grievances. Such an ultimatum from a united South, he believed, would lead northern legislatures to rescind their unconstitutional defiances of national laws.

Only a state convention, not the legislature, had a right to speak for the people on a matter that concerned them so dearly, he declared. "You must refer this question to the people," he said. "Sovereignty is not in the Legislature. . . . You are the servants of the people, and not their masters. Power resides with the people of this country."

Toombs again interrupted, with the comment, "I am afraid of conventions," and Stephens answered:

> I am not afraid of any convention legally chosen by the people . . . But do not let the question which comes before the people be put to them in the language of my honorable friend who addressed you last night, "Will you submit to Abolition rule, or will you resist?"

TOOMBS: I do not wish the people to be cheated.

STEPHENS: How are we going to cheat the people by calling on them to elect delegates to a convention to decide all these questions, without any dictation or direction? . . . He wishes us to have no convention, but for the legislature to submit this question to the people, "submission to Abolition rule or resistance." Now, who in Georgia is going to vote to submit to Abolition rule?

TOOMBS: The convention will.

STEPHENS: No, my friend, Georgia will not do it. . . . I advise the calling of a convention, with the earnest desire to preserve the peace and harmony of the state. I should dislike above all things to see violent measures adopted, or a disposition to take the sword in hand by individuals without the authority of law. My honorable friend said last night, "I ask you to give me the sword; for if you do not give it to me, as God lives, I shall take it myself."

TOOMBS: I will. (Tremendous applause)

STEPHENS: I have no doubt that my honorable friend feels as he says. It is only his excessive ardor that makes him use such an expression; but this will pass off with the excitement of the hour.

Should the delegates of the people decide on secession, then, as a loyal Georgian, he would obey that mandate, Stephens announced. He concluded solemnly:

> My position is for the maintenance of the honor, the rights, the equality, the security, and the glory of my native State in the Union, if possible; but if these cannot be maintained in the Union, then I am for their maintenance, at all hazards, out of it. Next to the honor and glory of Georgia, the land of my birth, I hold the honor and glory of our common country. I am proud of Georgia, of her history, of her present standing. I am proud of her motto, which I would have duly respected, at the present time, by all her sons—"Wisdom, Justice, and Moderation." I would have her rights and those of the Southern States maintained now upon these principles . . . But, if all this fails, we shall, at least, have the satisfaction of knowing that we have done our duty, and all that patriotism could require.[33]

When Stephens resumed his seat amid prolonged applause, Toombs is said to have risen and shouted above the noise: "Fellow citizens, we have just listened to a speech from one of the brightest intellects and purest patriots that now lives. I move that this meeting now adjourn, with three cheers for Alexander H. Stephens of Georgia!" Pendleton states that the applause greeting this motion was deafening.[34]

Stephens' warning against secession was seconded the next evening by Benjamin H. Hill. Hill had served on the executive committee of the Constitutional Union party in 1851 and 1852. He joined the American party in 1854 and was defeated for Congress the following year. A supporter of Fillmore in 1856, he engaged in bitter verbal jousts with Toombs and Stephens. Defeated for the governorship in 1857, he was elected to the Georgia Senate in 1859. During the bitter 1860 presidential campaign he led the Georgia supporters of Bell on the platform of no federal control of slavery in the territories save only for the protection of property. When news of

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[33] This text of the speech is from Stephens, II, 279–300, where it was reprinted, the speaker claims, from a verbatim report taken at the meeting by "Mr. Marshall," with only a few verbal corrections by the speaker. Stephens said the speech was entirely extemporaneous and that he had written nothing in preparation for it. In his prison diary, he declared that this speech was sincere and that nothing he ever said before or since was inconsistent with it. See Myrta L. Avary, ed., *Recollections of Alexander H. Stephens: His Diary Kept when a Prisoner at Fort Warren* (New York, 1910), pp. 527–528; see also Phillips, *Toombs,* pp. 202–203; Pendleton, pp. 158–163.

[34] Pendleton, p. 163.

Lincoln's election prompted a motion in the Georgia Senate to secede immediately, Hill was instrumental in defeating it.[35]

Hill's prestige was not as high as that of Toombs and Stephens. For one thing, he was much younger, about thirty-eight. He bore the stigma of prominent association with a disrupted political party. Furthermore, many remembered that only a year earlier he had written a letter which appeared in several papers, offering to support Governor Brown if he would renounce the Democratic party, and declaring that only one course now remained open to the South, "war in every sense by which the term is defined."[36] His fusion efforts in the late campaign had antagonized the Breckinridge Democrats, and his relations with Stephens were cool. Nevertheless, Ben Hill had a strong personal following.

Hill had a reputation as a powerful debater; his voice was said to be second only to that of Stephens in carrying power. A reporter characterized his delivery as "quick" and "powerful," carrying "the crowd with a whirlwind of eloquence . . . in flights, always rising and finally sublime." "Hill discussed with opponents; Stephens debated with them; Toombs ignored them."[37] Although Stephens was generally recognized as a debater to be feared, there is evidence that Georgia audiences thought Hill had out-debated "Little Aleck" in the campaign of 1856.

Like Stephens, Hill began his speech solemnly, stressing the gravity of the issue of separation from a government which Georgians had called the best on earth.[38] He plunged almost immediately into an analogy between their situation and that of a sailor in a storm at sea, who, to save his ship, found it necessary to throw overboard everything but his chart and compass. "We are at sea, my friends," he continued. "Let us throw overboard our passions, our prejudices, and our party feelings. . . . But let us hold on to reason and moderation. These, and these alone, point always to the fixed star of truth, by whose guidance we may yet safely come to shore."

After stressing the need for agreement among themselves on the best way to secure "our equality and rights," Hill stated that their chief grievance was that "the anti-slavery sentiment at the North has been made an instrument of political power." He listed six "specifications" in proof of this grievance:

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[35] Pearce, pp. 38–42; Avery, pp. 138–139; Phillips, ed., *Correspondence of Toombs, et al.*, pp. 316, 381, 384–391, 408, 560, 618.

[36] Montgomery, pp. 229–230.

[37] Reed, p. 146; Graham, IX, 62.

[38] The text of the speech here quoted is from Benjamin H. Hill, Jr., *Senator Benjamin H. Hill of Georgia: His Life, Writings, and Speeches* (Atlanta, 1891), pp. 237–250. The author states this is the only speech against secession by Hill that has been preserved. According to him, Hill had not written the speech in advance, but wrote it from memory four days later in response to a request from forty-one persons who had heard it and who wished to publish it. Hill responded to this request November 19: "Since the reception of your letter I have hastily written out the speech to which you refer. I could not recall the exact language, but the argument, such as it is, is herewith submitted for your disposal." See also Pearce, pp. 43–46.

(1) that a large political party hostile to slavery had been organized in the North; (2) that this party in many states had passed antislavery acts nullifying federal law; (3) that this party had elected northern governors who refused to recognize slaves as property; (4) that northern courts of this party had declared the Fugitive Slave Law unconstitutional; (5) that the northern states sought the extinction of slavery and repudiated the Constitutional provisions and southern state laws concerning slavery, and (6) that this party had secured the executive department of the federal government and was trying to secure the judicial and legislative departments.

"Now, my friends," he continued, "the next question is, shall these grievances be resisted. I say they ought to be resisted—resisted at all hazards." He went on to show that the fancied differences between the secessionists and unionists were not real:

> One man says he will not resist Lincoln. His adversary pronounces that treason to the South and the man a Black Republican. Another man says he will resist Lincoln and demands immediate secession. His adversary pronounces that treason to the Constitution and the man a disunionist. What do we mean by Lincoln? Stop and define. The first means by Lincoln the man elected, the second means by Lincoln the issue on which he is elected. Neither will resist the first, both will resist the latter, and so they agree and did agree all the time they were disputing!

Having agreed on the complaints, he continued, they should consider the next step: "Who shall determine the mode, measure, and time of this resistance? My reply is: The people through their delegate Convention duly assembled." He then announced that leaders of the different shades of opinion on secession had conferred earlier in the day and had agreed that the people should pass on the question.

He compared immediate secessionists to British General Braddock, whose rash decision led his command to disaster. Those who would seek secession only as a last resort after all attempts to settle grievances in the Union had failed he compared to George Washington. The immediate secessionists claimed their grievances resulted from an innate antislavery fanaticism, while the cooperationists maintained that the antislavery sentiment was not innate, but merely a temporary result of cupidity, he said. He explained that England freed her West Indian slaves in the hope of ending slavery in the South and thus ruining the competition of southern with British colonial cotton. This British antislavery campaign convinced the North, he claimed, but when Britain's attempt to raise cotton in India failed, Britain became a defender of southern slavery, which helped supply her mills with cotton. Admitting that "this revolution in English sentiment has not yet reached the Northern people," he asserted that "the same causes must slowly produce it." He pointed to the spread of proslavery opinion in America, stating that whereas early southern statesmen opposed slavery, southern leaders were now united in its support. These and other reasons showed that southern grievances were curable within the Union, he declared.

Hill offered a proposal similar to that presented by Stephens: Call a Georgia convention to demand that the war against slavery cease and invite other southern states to join in the demand; then, if the federal government should refuse redress even to one state, let that be cause for abandoning the Union. This principle of forcing a state to conform to national law was employed successfully against South Carolina by a southern president, he added. Here a voice in the audience cried out, "The presidents we have had won't enforce the law." Hill replied: "Then you ought to have dissolved long ago. . . . Let us begin with Mr. Buchanan. . . . Perhaps now a fugitive is standing protected by a Northern mob in a Northern state, in defiance of the United States marshal. Let us demand now that Mr. Buchanan enforce the law against that rebel and against that state . . . which suffers him to be protected on her soil. Let us have out the army and navy, and if they be not sufficient, let there be a call for volunteers. Many of us say we are ready to fight. . . . Here is a chance. Let us tender our services."

If their present laws were insufficient to enforce our constitutional rights, they should have new laws, he continued. Again he was interrupted from the floor by a question: "How long will you wait?" To this Hill answered: "Until the experiment is tried and both the demands enumerated may be tested and the contingencies may transpire before the fourth of March next. If they do not, if a larger time shall be needed, Mr. Lincoln can do us no damage. . . . The North demanded of a Southern president the execution of the law against a Southern state in 1833. Now let the South compel a Northern President to execute the laws against a Northern people; yea, the very rebels that elected him." Again he was interrupted: "Do you believe Lincoln would issue his proclamation?" Hill answered: "We can make him do it. It is his oath. He will be a traitor to refuse, and we shall have a right to hang him." The fifteen southern states could make Lincoln enforce the laws, he contended. The southern states had never before taken a resolute stand on their rights in the Union, he pointed out, but they should do so now to save the Union. If the Union was good, he asked, "why should we surrender its blessings because Massachusetts violates the laws? . . . Drive Massachusetts to the duties of the Constitution or from its benefits. . . . Let us defend the Union against its enemies—not abandon it to them."

If the policy he advocated succeeded, Hill declared in closing, it would bring about the triumph of law over "mobocracy," American constitutional government would be vindicated, and agitation on the slavery question would cease forever. If the policy should fail, it would still have advantages over immediate secession, in that it would give the South time to prepare for secession, it would unite Georgians and the entire South, and it would secure the good opinion of all mankind for patience, patriotism, and forbearance.

On the same day that Hill spoke, Johnson received an invitation from George A. Hall and other legislators to address the body. He declined to speak, for reasons we have already seen, but wrote out his views for circulation among the members of the legislature. In his statement, Johnson declared that the election of Lincoln was not a sufficient cause to justify secession, especially when the split in the South was responsible for Lincoln's success. He advised a policy similar to that suggested by Stephens and Hill; it had four steps: (1) let the legislature put the state in condition to meet any emergency and call a convention to determine future action; (2) let the convention "reaffirm the Georgia Platform" and demand repeal of all state laws nullifying federal fugitive slave laws; (3) let the convention appeal to northern states to suppress antislavery agitation, and (4) let the convention ask "a consultation with the other Southern states . . . in such . . . manner as may be best calculated to secure concert of action."[39]

Among other prominent Georgians participating in the debate were Senator Alfred Iverson, Georgia Supreme Court Justice Henry L. Benning, Congressman John J. Jones, and former legislators Thomas C. Howard and John H. Howard—all rampant secessionists. Egging on and adding their arguments to those of the Georgia radicals were three arch-secessionists from other states, Edmund Ruffin of Virginia, Robert Barnwell Rhett of South Carolina, and Judge W. L. Harris of Mississippi. Judge Harris addressed the legislature November 17, urging the lawmakers to join Mississippi in taking measures to insure southern safety.[40] Governor Brown addressed the legislature December 12, urging immediate secession before Lincoln's inauguration, on the grounds that such action might lead to reunion, with concessions from the North, and that secession was unlikely to result in civil war.[41]

In the meantime, the immediate effects of the legislative debate were observable. On November 16, the day following Ben Hill's address and the day of Johnson's written statement against hasty action, the legislature appropriated the million dollars for defense requested by Governor Brown. During the next five days the legislature authorized the governor to accept the services of 10,000 troops, ordered a constitutional convention to meet on January 16, set January 2 as the date for the election of convention delegates, and adopted a resolution urging the formation of a confederacy of southern states.[42]

A survey of the effect of the debate on its immediate audience shows no clear-cut victory for either side. Herschel V. Johnson describes the attitude of the legislators:

[39] "From the Autobiography of Herschel V. Johnson," *American Historical Rev.*, XXX (1924–1925), pp. 323–324.

[40] Phillips, *Toombs*, p. 196; T. Conn Bryan, "The Secession of Georgia," *Georgia Historical Quart.*, XXXI (1947), 90.

[41] The other speeches before the legislature are not treated here because authorities are generally agreed that the important addresses were those of T. R. R. Cobb, Toombs, Stephens, and Hill. See H. V. Johnson's quotation, which follows; Phillips, *Toombs*, p. 199; Dwight L. Dumond, *The Secession Movement, 1860–1861* (New York, 1931), pp. 142–143; Hesseltine, p. 377; Pearce, pp. 42–43; Montgomery, p. 244; Clement Eaton, *A History of the Old South* (New York, 1949), pp. 587–589.

[42] Green, pp. 248–265; Dumond, *Secession*, p. 144; Montgomery, pp. 244–245; Phillips, *State Rights*, pp. 196–198.

> If left to themselves, they would have inclined to a conservative course. But when the Toombses, and Iversons, and Howards and Joneses, Bennings, and Cobbs and the men of that stamp, arrived as outside counsellors, the fire was soon kindled. Many of these distinguished men urged the Legislature to take Georgia out of the Union. They were rampant—they could not wait the slow process of referring the question to the people by calling a Convention. They hesitated to trust the people. At one time the General Assembly—or rather a majority—were disposed to heed these rash counsels. But the question was discussed in the Legislature and out of it by able speakers, such as Toombs, Benning, T.R.R. Cobb and Stephens. The last named gentleman spoke the night of November 14th. It was an able speech, so conciliatory in tone and forcible in argument, that it produced a very salutary effect, and perhaps prevented any formal attempt to take the State out of the Union by Legislative action.[43]

Undoubtedly, the fire-eaters were temporarily defeated in their aim to persuade the legislature to pass an act of secession. Yet, they won a partial victory in obtaining warlike demands of the governor, in setting the election of delegates for an early date, and arousing emotions through their appeals to fear, prejudice, and pride.

The effect on the state-wide audience was to add to the excitement, already at a high pitch since Lincoln's election. Mass meetings to draw up memorials were held in increasing numbers. Most of them urged secession as the only remedy for existing evils and condemned Republican "fanaticism." Some counseled moderation and called for state and southern sectional conventions; a few recommended further attempts to secure redress in the Union.[44]

Some reflection of the public attitude may be gleaned from editorial comment. The Atlanta *Confederacy*, November 27, advised Georgians to put no confidence in Toombs and Cobb, "the one . . . controlled by impulse and passion, the other by ambition and circumstance," but to follow the advice of Stephens, known for his "integrity, moderation, sagacity, and preeminent ability." The next day the Atlanta *Intelligencer* predicted that the four-fifths of the state's counties that had given Breckinridge majorities over both Bell and Douglas, would vote for outright secession, as would many of the other counties.[45] The Augusta *Daily Constitutionalist* declared, November 15, that "the most . . . sanguine Unionist in Georgia . . . must read, in the signs of the times, . . . the feebleness of Union sentiment in this state." It advised no delay in protecting slavery, but cautioned against immediate secession. There was no need to secede before two years after March 4, because the Black Republicans could not gain control of the federal government before then, it explained, adding, "Immediate secession would be injurious to all, and disastrous to many interests in Georgia." Only two weeks later, the same paper stated, under the headline "The Argument is Exhausted—Stand by Your Arms!" that "we must, as prudent men, seek new guards for future security." On December 30, this paper published an editorial headed "Disunion," which declared: "There is no majority in Georgia for secession; but every county meeting has resolved . . . that disunion is either a necessity now, or will be on the refusal of new guarantees, and even the most conservative will reluctantly vote for immediate secession." The editorial predicted that Georgia would secede before March 4, 1861. This change in the attitude of the *Constitutionalist* was commented on by Johnson, in a letter to Stephens, November 30, 1860:

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[43] "From the Autobiography of Herschel V. Johnson," p. 323. The punctuation, spelling, and capitalization are Johnson's own.

[44] Phillips, *Toombs*, pp. 212–214; a large collection of these memorials is contained in Candler, pp. 58–156.

[45] Green, pp. 251–252.

> The signs of the times are gloomy indeed. It seems to me we are as destitute of a press as we were in the presidential election. The defection of the *Constitutionalist* grieves me. Perhaps *defection* is not the word—the *loss* of its influence is perhaps more appropriate. I certainly regard it as counselling secession. . . . The spirit of revolution is rampant. . . . South Carolina will certainly secede . . . If so, she and her confederates in the Southern States—especially Georgia—will precipitate matters—give them a shape that will drag us all down together.[46]

To Stephens the outlook was equally gloomy as November drew to a close. He wrote to a friend: "I should not be at all surprised to see secession adopted by them [the convention] as the proper remedy. The country is in a panic and there is no telling where it will end."[47]

Meanwhile, the debate was causing repercussions outside Georgia. The Lexington *Kentucky Statesman* stated on November 20 that it had noted no opinion against secession expressed by Union men in Georgia: "Mr. A. H. Stevens [*sic*], to whom so many eager eyes were turned, has virtually seconded the whole movement, only differing from the secessionists in a preliminary evolution of the forces," the newspaper commented. "There seems really to be no opposing minority in the Cotton States; but if there is, it is powerless." The New Orleans *Bee*, November 28, chided *The New York Times* for failing to comprehend the seriousness of the secession movement: "The *Times* displays the shallowness of its knowledge by attaching immense importance to the speeches of ALEXANDER H. STEPHENS, and to a few Union meetings recently held in Georgia."[48]

The debate, and especially Stephens' speech of November 14, received national attention. Lincoln wrote to Stephens requesting a copy of his speech, and many other prominent Northerners sent him their congratulations. The Cincinnati *Enquirer* urged editorially that the southern states follow Stephens' suggestion to meet in convention and present their grievances to the North. Nicolay and Hay wrote that "the speech created an immense sensation throughout the South and . . . was enthusiastically hailed by the North." Horace Greeley, influential editor of the New York *Tribune*, termed Stephens' statement "frank and noble," but found "a dead fly in the ointment, which sadly marred its perfume . . . a distinct avowal of the right of the State to overrule his personal convictions, and plunge him into treason to the Nation."[49]

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[46] Dumond, *Editorials*, pp. 242–247, 279–284, 380–385; Flippin, p. 159.
[47] Phillips, ed., *Correspondence of Toombs, et al.*, pp. 503–504.
[48] Dumond, *Editorials*, pp. 253, 274–275.

Soon after the legislature passed the bill calling a state constitutional convention to decide Georgia's course, the debate was taken to the people of the state in the campaign for convention delegates. The unionists were disorganized. Johnson complained there was no time for a thorough campaign and made only one speech, in Louisville, Jefferson County, which elected him as one of its delegates.[50] Sickly "Little Aleck" Stephens, always subject to moods, gloomily expressed the fear that "we are past salvation, . . . there is not enough patriotism in the country North or South to save it."[51] His brother, Judge Linton Stephens, prodded "Aleck" for his inaction, writing, on December 2, 1860: "I think you are too much disposed to despair. . . . Your despair will be a cause of defeat—not an indication of the coming inevitable defeat. I don't believe the demagogues yet have full possession of the people. On the contrary, never was the confidence of the people in you so strong. . . . Don't disappoint them. You can save the country."[52]

Alexander Stephens took the lead in organizing the cooperationists early in December. He persuaded fifty-two members of the legislature, including Senator Hill, to join him in advising the voters to secure pledges from state convention candidates to support an all-southern convention and to try every possible remedy before voting for secession. This made some impression on public opinion, Pearce believes.[53] Linton Stephens made some powerful speeches, as did Judge Hiram Warner, Garnett Andrews, and other prominent Unionists. Johnson and Alexander Stephens wrote numerous letters, some appearing in newspapers and some published as handbills, warning against the dangers of secession. But the conservative campaign lacked vigor and, as Johnson recalled, "what speaking there was was confined almost entirely to the secessionists."[54]

The Georgia secessionist leaders were busy. Senator Alfred Iverson told his colleagues in Washington December 5 that Georgia intended to secede. Treasury Secretary Howell Cobb published a pamphlet arguing that the election of Lincoln justified secession because Lincoln was bound to carry out Republican antislavery principles. He wrote that it would be futile to amend the Constitution, because that would not change the hearts of the northern people, who "may promise anything, but in the end will do nothing." He urged immediate action:

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[49] Pendleton, pp. 164–165; John G. Nicolay and John Hay, *Abraham Lincoln* (New York, 1890), III, 267; Henry Wilson, *The Rise and Fall of the Slave Power in America* (Boston, 1877), III, 7; Daniel W. Howe, *Political History of Secession* (New York, 1914), p. 455; Cincinnati *Enquirer*, Jan. 8, 1861, in Ralph R. Fahrney, "Alexander H. Stephens and Secession," unpub. thesis (Univ. of Chicago, 1922), p. 23; Greeley, *American Conflict*, p. 343.

[50] "From the Autobiography of Herschel V. Johnson," p. 324.

[51] Phillips, ed., *Correspondence of Toombs, et al.*, p. 503.

[52] James D. Waddell, *Biographical Sketch of Judge Linton Stephens* (Atlanta, 1877), p. 238.

[53] Pearce, pp. 47–48.

[54] "From the Autobiography of Herschel V. Johnson," p. 324; Phillips, ed., *Correspondence of Toombs, et al.*, pp. 504–505.

> On the fourth day of March, 1861, the Federal Government will pass into the hands of the Abolitionists. It will then cease to have the slightest claim either upon your confidence or your loyalty; and, in my honest judgment, each hour that Georgia remains thereafter a member of the Union will be an hour of degradation, to be followed by certain and speedy ruin. . . . Arouse, then, all your manhood for the great work before you, and be prepared on that day to announce and maintain your Independence out of the Union, for you will never again have equality and justice in it.[55]

Two days later Cobb resigned from Buchanan's cabinet and prepared to return to Georgia to campaign for secession. On December 13, Senator Iverson joined twenty-nine other southern congressmen in an address to all their constituents, declaring that "all hope of relief in the Union . . . is extinguished" and urging "separate state secession . . . from an unnatural and hostile Union."

In the meantime, Toombs had returned to Washington, leaving behind him for publication a letter which at first filled the fire-eaters with dismay. Although Toombs had asked the legislature to give him a sword, this letter suggested that secession be used only as a last resort if other attempts to redress southern grievances should fail. Alexander Stephens wrote his brother: "The minute-men down here are in a rage at Toombs' letter. They say he has backed down, that they intend to vote him a *tin* sword." Stephens was convinced that the letter was a ruse to win the support of conservatives who would follow Toombs into the secession movement.[56] On December 19, Toombs proposed a series of constitutional amendments providing for the protection of slave property in the territories, the enforcement of the fugitive slave laws, and the punishment of persons aiding insurrection or invasion. His proposals were defeated in the Senate Committee of Thirteen, of which he was a member, as were those of Senator John J. Crittenden of Kentucky for an extension of the Missouri Compromise line in the territories. Whereupon Toombs telegraphed Georgia newspapers that, since the Black Republicans refused to make any guarantees for the protection of southern property rights, and since their aim was to delude Georgians into voting against secessionists as convention delegates, "Secession by the fourth of March next should be thundered from the ballot-box by the unanimous voice of Georgia on the second of January next."[57]

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[55] For Iverson's speech, see *Cong. Globe*, 36th Cong., 2nd Sess., pp. 10–12; Cobb's "Letter to the People of Georgia," Dec. 6, 1860, in full in Phillips, ed., *Correspondence of Toombs, et al.*, pp. 505–516; see also Phillips, *Toombs*, pp. 205–206.

[56] Toombs's letter to E. B. Pullin, chairman of a committee of citizens of Danburg, Ga., Dec. 13, 1860, in Phillips, ed., *Correspondence of Toombs, et al.*, pp. 519–522; see also Phillips, *Toombs*, p. 204.

On January 1, 1861, Toombs telegraphed another warning to Georgia: "The cabinet is broken up. . . . Fort Pulaski is in danger. The Abolitionists are defiant." Heeding Toombs's warning, Governor Brown immediately ordered the state militia to seize Fort Pulaski, a federal stronghold at Savannah. This action encouraged the immediate secessionists and alarmed the conservatives, who criticized it severely. A week later Toombs delivered a challenging farewell speech in the Senate and left to take his place in the state convention.[58]

Meanwhile, the Cobb brothers were leading the campaign for the election of immediate secessionists to the state convention. Aided by Henry L. Benning and other secessionists, they stumped the state and wrote handbills and letters to the newspapers. "They were more than zealous—they were frenzied." Johnson charged:

> They did not . . . present the issue fairly. . . . They insisted that . . . it would not bring war—that if it should, the Yankees were cowards and would not fight —and that, at the worst, it would be a short war, in which the South would achieve an easy victory and that we should then have a Southern Confederacy, with a homogeneous population and interests, which would enjoy the friendship of all nations and the admiration of mankind. These were the fancy pictures painted to their followers by the leaders of the Breckinridge seceders.[59]

Secessionist literature was widely distributed. There were numerous rumors of violence and of threats uttered against Stephens and other conservatives; unionists reportedly could not express themselves openly with safety in many counties.[60]

The attitude of Georgia voters during the campaign for convention delegates was the subject of conflicting reports. While Howell Cobb was still in the national capital, his brother Thomas wrote him to hurry back to Georgia to speak, because "we have trouble here . . . and *no one* but *yourself* can quell it." A few days later, another secessionist leader wrote him, "Where are all our speakers? . . . The cry of cooperation is injuring us."[61] George A. Hall, a legislator from Greenville, wrote Johnson that the "masses do not sympathize with these extreme men . . . they have strength only in the towns and cities, the country people are against them." Johnson himself believed the people favored the Union, but were misled by their blind trust in the promises of the secessionists.[62] The Augusta *Daily Chronicle and Sentinel* on December 22 voiced its confidence in the growing Union sentiment in the state: "Two weeks ago we estimated the vote in our January Convention as probably 169 for immediate secession, to 132 against it. A great change has occurred since then, and now we have scarcely a doubt that the immediate secessionists will be defeated at the January election. We do not believe . . . that 140 immediate secessionists can possibly be elected to the Convention, unless some great and unforeseen revulsion takes place."[63]

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[57] Phillips, ed., *Correspondence of Toombs, et al.*, p. 525; see also Dumond, *Secession*, pp. 196–199; Hesseltine, pp. 380–381; Eaton, pp. 576–579; Phillips, *Toombs*, p. 211.

[58] Phillips, ed., *Correspondence of Toombs, et al.*, p. 528; Phillips, *Toombs*, pp. 201–211; Pearce, pp. 48–49; *Cong. Globe*, 36th Cong., 2nd Sess., pp. 267–271; Flippin, p. 201.

[59] Phillips, ed., *Correspondence of Toombs, et al.*, p. 524; Dumond, *Editorials*, p. 368; "From the Autobiography of Herschel V. Johnson," p. 324.

[60] Phillips, ed., *Correspondence of Toombs, et al.*, p. 526; Green, pp. 252–253, 257–258; Holland, p. 27.

[61] Phillips, ed., *Correspondence of Toombs, et al.*, pp. 522, 524.

That the revulsion did take place was borne out by the vote on January 2, 1861. When the ballots were counted secessionist delegates had 50,243 votes to 37,123 conservative votes. The fact that almost 20,000 fewer votes were cast than in the preceding presidential election may indicate that many citizens were too frightened to appear or were certain of the result or refrained from voting because of bad weather. "The advantages were all on the side of those who had determined on secession," stated the historian Craven. "Fears and uncertainty played into their hands. . . . The wild talk of Republican newspapers also weakened the Southern conservative and strengthened his foes. Northern editors talked of the hated 'Slave Power' and boasted of the ease with which it could be crushed."[64]

Other events also strengthened the position of the secessionists in the campaign for delegates and in the state convention. The secession of South Carolina on December 20, 1860, was hailed in many towns in Georgia by barbecues, torchlight parades, and fireworks. Governor Brown's seizure of Fort Pulaski strengthened their hand, as did the unsuccessful attempt of the relief ship "Star of the West" to reinforce the federal garrison at Fort Sumter. The secession of Mississippi on January 9 and of Florida and Alabama on January 11 added fuel to the disunion flame. The Savannah *Morning News* on January 12 predicted Georgia would be next and exclaimed: "The Rubicon is passed—a new nation is born! Coercion, with a united South, we may laugh to scorn." Howell Cobb confidently predicted immediate, perpetual secession by the Georgia convention, and Alexander Stephens gloomily admitted to a friend, "I now feel almost confident that this State will go for secession." Radical James A. Nisbet of Macon urged Johnson to join the seceders because "the feeling of resistance to Lincoln's administration is growing daily more intensified in Georgia. . . ."[65]

Some opponents of disunion expressed hope of avoiding an immediate break. Hill condemned those who celebrated the secession of South

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[62] Flippin, pp. 173–174.

[63] Dumond, *Editorials*, pp. 361–363.

[64] Green, pp. 257–258; Holland, p. 26; Montgomery, p. 246; Craven, *The Coming of the Civil War* (New York, 1942), p. 432. Alexander Means, *Diary for 1861*, Ross H. McLean, ed. (Atlanta, 1949), p. 12, is authority for the weather on election day.

[65] Bryan, p. 93; Flippin, pp. 175, 201–204; Phillips, ed., *Correspondence of Toombs, et al.*, pp. 524, 527, 529.

Carolina and declared: "We are in danger now from nothing *but ourselves*. . . . Certain great men, so called, are *playing tricks*, in this awful crisis, to excite the people!" He expressed his faith that Georgia would not be coerced to stay in the Union nor "hurried out before the proper time."[66] Condemning Governor Brown's seizure of Fort Pulaski as a subterfuge by "the Ass of Asses," on the advice of "King Cobb," to "plunge Georgia into war and carnage," the Atlanta *Southern Confederacy* predicted that, under the guidance of A. H. Stephens, H. V. Johnson, Hiram Warner, Linton Stephens, and B. H. Hill, "Georgia will be rescued from rashness and precipitancy."[67]

The delegates began pouring into Milledgeville days before the convention opened. Three hundred and one delegates had been elected, but four failed to appear, so 297 actually took part in the proceedings. In addition to these, Governor Brown, Howell Cobb, Charles J. Jenkins, the state congressional delegation, the state judges, the president of the state senate, and the speaker of the house were seated in the hall. Present, too, were the emissaries of the states that already had seceded. Johnson, in his usual picturesque language, wrote: "The Fiery Spirits were there as delegates. They were defiant, wrathful, overbearing, dictatorial; but withal, they exhibited the firmness of deliberate purpose, not without the dignity of talent combined with great eloquence and personal worth. . . . Dr. Means, Judge Warner, Mr. B. H. Hill, the two Stephens and myself were probably the most prominent men elected as delegates opposed to secession."[68]

Johnson suggested that Alexander Stephens assume the leadership of those opposed to secession in the convention, but Stephens declined with the counterproposal that Johnson lead the opposition, with Stephens in a supporting role. Means, one of the state's foremost educators, and Hill also urged Johnson to plan a program for the Unionists. Johnson thereupon drew up a preamble and resolutions for presentation to the convention.[69]

The convention met behind closed doors. Former Governor George W. Crawford was elected president of the convention by acclamation. The first two sessions were devoted to organizing the convention, adopting rules for its proceedings, and listening to eloquent pleas for immediate secession by the commissioners from two of the seceded states, James L. Orr of South Carolina and John G. Shorter of Alabama.[70]

The secessionists opened the debate on Friday, January 18, with a resolution by Judge Eugenius A. Nisbet of the State Supreme Court that "it is the right and duty of this state to secede from the Union." Judge Nisbet had supported the Georgia Platform with Howell Cobb, Stephens, and Toombs in 1850–1851, and later had joined the American Party and still later the Democrats. He was "a gentleman of great distinction in the state," wrote Stephens. "In religion and politics . . . he had been regarded as the embodiment of Conservatism. For all those virtues and excellencies which constitute what is recognized as real worth in private character, no man was esteemed higher."[71]

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[66] Hill, pp. 38–40.

[67] Holland, pp. 28–29.

[68] "From the Autobiography of Herschel V. Johnson," p. 325.

[69] "From the Autobiography of Herschel V. Johnson," p. 325.

[70] Means, p. 13; Candler, I, 228. Candler, I, contains the complete Journal of the Convention, which, unfortunately, includes no transcripts of the speeches, but merely records who spoke and what motions were made.

Before the vote could be taken on Nisbet's proposal Johnson presented a substitute series, proclaiming Georgia's attachment to the Union, but threatening secession as a last resort if her rights were not secured by constitutional amendments protecting slavery in slave states and in territories, permitting new states to determine the status of slavery at the time of their admission, and providing severe penalties for the violation of federal legislation on slavery. They also declared that Georgia would aid in the defense of any seceding state threatened by federal coercion and would herself secede and join a southern confederacy if northern state antislavery acts were not repealed. Johnson's resolutions called for a congress of all the southern states to be held at Atlanta, February 16, 1861, to determine the policy of all slave states toward the federal government. They concluded with a motion to adjourn the convention until February 25, when it should reconvene for the report of Georgia's delegates to the Atlanta congress of southern states.[72]

The Johnson resolutions precipitated what the convention journal described as "an elaborate discussion," in which the resolutions were attacked by T. R. R. Cobb, Toombs, Augustus Reese, Francis S. Bartow, and Judge Nisbet, and were supported by Johnson, Dr. Means, Ben Hill, and the Stephens brothers. We have today the full text of only one of these speeches, that of A. H. Stephens, and no reports of what was said by Toombs, Reese, Bartow, Nisbet, Linton Stephens, and Hill. Johnson and Means, in autobiographical writings, made brief references to their speeches, and various writers have mentioned the gist of Cobb's reiterated demand for immediate secession.[73]

Accounts of Johnson's speech in this debate vary in their opinions of its effectiveness. We are informed that he was a forceful and impressive speaker, whose delivery was enhanced by his striking personal appearance. He was a huge man, "weighing two hundred forty-five pounds and well proportioned." Although he had once been extremely popular in the state, he felt that he had little prestige with the convention delegates. "I knew how unpopular I was in the Convention," he wrote later.

> My speech was brief but never reported. . . . It was entirely extemporaneous and I had never taken the trouble to commit it to writing. . . . I spoke under the enervating effects of almost overpowering sadness. . . . I said in substance, that, though believing in the right of secession, . . . I believed it was unnecessary; that,

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[71] Means, p. 14; Stephens, II, 313–314; Saye, p. 231.
[72] Flippin, pp. 180–182 *n.*
[73] Flippin, p. 181; Pearce, pp. 49–51; Saye, p. 232.

> if we would be patient and give the conservative element of the North time to organize and act, we might hope for redress and safety in the Union and at all events it was due to the Border states, to the magnitude of the occasion and the weighty consideration which should lead us to break up the Union with caution, to make the experiment; that I offered my substitute in no captious spirit, but rather to test the sense of the Convention, whether it was the deliberate purpose of the majority to dissolve the connection of the State with the United States; that, if it were not, then my substitute might at least be suggestive of some plan of action which would give time for the "sober second thought" of the people of both sections and that I had a strong hope that such "sober second thought" would bring relief.[74]

Johnson concluded with a motion that both his resolutions and those of Judge Nisbet be referred to the committee the latter had recommended be appointed to draft a secession ordinance.

Dr. Means, in his diary, stated merely that he himself spoke for three-fourths of an hour against immediate secession. His prestige with his audience was high, and he had the reputation of being Georgia's most celebrated lecturer of that time.[75]

Alexander H. Stephens' speech in support of Johnson's resolutions proved a disappointment to Johnson, who felt that the former failed to exert himself and thus conceded defeat. In his brief talk to the convention Stephens supported Johnson's motion to refer both sets of resolutions to a committee. He reiterated his opinion that redress of southern grievances could be secured in the Union by a congress of southern states and that secession "for any existing causes" was unjustified and unnecessary. He declared he would not vote for secession, but that, if a majority of the delegates did, "I shall bow in submission to that decision."[76]

T. R. R. Cobb sounded the keynote for the secessionists in the fiery and eloquent plea, "We can make better terms out of the Union than in it!" Stephens later wrote that this "key-note" by Cobb turned the "wavering sentiment in Georgia," and "did more . . . in carrying the State out, than all the arguments and all the eloquence of all others combined."[77]

The debate on Johnson's resolutions was cut off by repeated calls for a test vote on the substance of Judge Nisbet's motion, "Secession or No Secession immediately." This question was put to the convention by President Crawford. The vote was 166 for immediate secession and 130 against. The president appointed a committee of seventeen secessionist and unionist leaders to draft an Ordinance of Secession for submission to the convention.[78]

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[74] "From the Autobiography of Herschel V. Johnson," p. 326; Flippin, pp. 144, 180–183.

[75] Means, p. 14.

[76] Flippin, pp. 185–186; Stephens, II, 305–307. Copies of a fiery, militant address, full of threats to the secessionists, spuriously ascribed to Stephens, were widely circulated, especially in the North, and were reprinted as authentic in collections of famous speeches as late as 1910. See Joseph V. Denney, *American Public Addresses* [Chicago, 1910], pp. 169–173. Stephens (I, pp. 23–24) denied in print that he had ever made such a speech.

[77] Stephens, II, p. 321; Montgomery, p. 248; Saye, p. 232; T. Conn Bryan, *Confederate Georgia* (Athens, Ga., 1953), p. 8.

Judge Nisbet, committee chairman, reported the Ordinance of Secession the following day. It was read twice, but before a vote could be taken, Hill called for a vote on the Johnson resolutions. The balloting showed 133 delegates for Johnson's resolutions to 164 against them. The two test votes having shown a majority for secession, the ordinance was put to a vote without debate and was adopted by 208 to 89, with 42 of the conservatives, including Means and Hill, joining the secessionists to pass the measure. Dr. Means declared that those who changed their votes did so because they believed that all hope for delaying secession was exhausted and that a solid front in Georgia would impress the North with the futility of trying to coerce the state. "MEMORABLE DAY," he wrote in his diary that night, "Second Independence declared!!!" Johnson, the Stephens brothers, and Judge Warner were among those voting no.[79]

Shortly after the secession ordinance was adopted, P. W. Alexander offered a resolution calling for a reconstruction of the federal Union "whenever the same can be done upon a basis that would secure . . . the rights and equality of the people of the slaveholding States." This resolution was referred to committee without a vote. On Monday, the day set for signing the Secession Ordinance, William Martin, of Lumpkin County, moved that the ordinance be submitted to the people of the state for ratification. The motion lost. And so, at noon Monday, January 21, 1861, the roll of the delegates was called by counties, and each affixed his signature to the ordinance.[80]

The announcement that the state was out of the Union was greeted by exultant shouts from the delegates who had voted to secede. As the news spread, bonfires, torchlight parades, and other celebrations were held throughout the state. Cannon were fired to signalize the event. The demonstrations gave the appearance that the will of the people had triumphed, possibly because the unionists were silent in their defeat. Many agreed with former Governor Johnson that "the State of Georgia was launched upon a dark, uncertain and dangerous sea," or with Ben Hill, whose aloofness in the general rejoicing caused the mobs to burn him in effigy.[81]

What caused an apparent majority for the Union in the fall of 1860 to be defeated by the secessionists within three months? Does this reversal indicate the failure of debate and discussion in determining policy in the face of strong social, political, and economic pressures? A summary of the events in Georgia indicates that the side that did the most effective communicating with its audience at a particular time, whether states' rights or unionist, won support of a majority of that audience. The Constitutional Unionists in 1850–

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[78] Means, p. 14; Montgomery, p. 248.
[79] Means, pp. 14–15; Candler, I, 251–260; Flippin, pp. 188–189.
[80] Flippin, pp. 189–193; Means, p. 15.
[81] "From the Autobiography of Herschel V. Johnson," p. 327; Hill, p. 41.

1851 carried on a more vigorous speaking campaign than the states' rights faction and won the vote. In 1860, the Bell and Douglas electioneers campaigned more forcefully than the Breckinridge Democrats, and the vote indicated a majority of about 2500 for settling differences within the Union. The debate before the Georgia Assembly in November, 1860, postponed the final decision, but the unionists appeared to have the advantage. In the interim between the Assembly session and the convention, Howell and T. R. R. Cobb and other secessionists campaigned tirelessly in Georgia, while Senators Toombs and Iverson beamed secession propaganda on the state from Washington, and Governor Brown, by voice, pen, and action, gave the cause authoritative support. Meanwhile, Johnson, Hill and the Stephens brothers were much less active than the secessionist leaders, and when they spoke, their prudent counsel lacked the clarion ring of the radical demands and emotional appeals.

The secessionist leaders were aided by events. While the personal prestige of the conservatives suffered from their support of losing candidates in the presidential race, that of the secessionists rose as their predictions of abolitionist violations of southern "rights" appeared to be borne out by the actions of Republican congressmen and northern state governments. Noisier than the conservatives, the secessionists repeatedly used appeals to the stronger and more easily aroused emotions: fear for family, of property loss, of personal injury; anger from hurt pride, from injustice, from damaged honor; love for family, friends, and home. They vitalized these appeals with challenges, threats, and dramatic action. In contrast, the calmer reasoning of the unionists lacked color. The careful induction and deduction on which Hill and Stephens based their arguments for forbearance paled before the menacing pictures of slave rebellions and northern invasions painted by Cobb and Robert Toombs.

The conclusion seems justified that the more effective persuasion was done by the speakers for secession and that their superior communication with their audience was an important factor in the decision of Georgia to secede.

New Governors Speak for War, January, 1861

WILLIAM B. HESSELTINE and LARRY GARA

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New Year's Day in 1861 dawned cold and crisp in New York City. The editors of *The New York Times* greeted the day with an essay whose forced optimism struck a warm and cheering note. "Today history opens the unwritten volume of the coming year, and the chapter duly begins. . . . But who," asked the editors, "can cast the horoscope of 1861?"

Having propounded the question, the *Times* proceeded to elaborate a starry-eyed review of the year 1860. "The old year has gone and with it a record as splendid as any era in the world's history." There had been the "enfranchisement" of Italy, "strides of liberty" in Russia and Hungary and France, and, above all, "the great triumph of freedom in our own fair land." The new year, too, "all over Europe" opened bright with hope and progress, "and whether it brings to it peace or war, either can but terminate in a larger liberty."

The new year in America was equally full of hope. It was not possible that "this Youthful Empire" should decline and fall, that it should be "cleft in twain by the sword of Africa, wielded by South Carolina." Rather, indeed, were the people "alive to the terrible responsibilities of freedom," and the "young giant of Liberty" would rule the land forever!

The professional optimism of the Republican *Times* horoscope was met, the same day, by the professional pessimism of the Democratic Boston *Post*. Although the writers of the *Post* made a feeble stab at the cheerfulness the day demanded by admitting that "providence has showered us with blessings," its Washington correspondent undertook to cast a horoscope compounded of realism and despair. He quickly descended from the stars to the realism of sordid politics.

"The Republicans," he said bitterly, "stand clutching their prize." They had won the presidency in the November elections, and they had now the patronage of a great nation. With it they had disrupted that nation, but party discipline prevented their taking conciliatory action to mend the damage they had caused. Now and then, he reported, one or another Republican wavered a little—"but he is shot down in an instant by his comrades." No supporter of Lincoln was bold enough to speak out for peace and Union. "They are bent on coercion," he predicted, "and are prepared, as a party, to carry the torch and the sword into every seceding state. They talk coercion. They act coercion."

The political situation led businessmen as well as journalists to consult the oracles. On January 3, the ancient investment house of Dun, Boyd and Company published a letter to their subscribers. "We are in the midst of a crisis," announced the company. "Last October we were, as a people, rich in resources, almost entirely recovered from the effects of the panic of 1857, free from foreign debt to an unusual degree, and with the promise of an eminently prosperous future." But in the third quarter of the year bankruptcies had almost equaled those in the preceding three quarters, the stagnation of the cotton market had drawn banking capital into the South and away from the West, while "the want of confidence, engendered by the present political crisis" kept new capital from the market. "Who can now say what the future will be?" asked Dun and Boyd.[1]

Despite the optimism of *The New York Times*, the situation in the country in January, 1861, needed clarification. Simply stated, the question was whether the newly elected Lincoln administration would follow a policy of coercion or of pacification through the timeworn method of compromise. The final answer could come only from Lincoln himself, who, to the disgust of Democrats and businessmen and the confusion of journalists and politicians, was noncommittal.

Since Lincoln would not or could not speak, the task of defining the position of the forthcoming administration devolved on other spokesmen of the Republican party—and dozens of editors and orators hurried to interpret the elections, to instruct both the people and the president-elect on the "true" policy of the Republicans, and to predict the future. On the eve of the November election, when Lincoln's victory was all but assured, *The New York Times* began a campaign to quiet popular alarm. "The attitude of the Republican Party," said editor Henry J. Raymond, "is eminently national and conservative." Its success would repress the sectional agitation, while its candidate "is an eminently just, upright, and conservative statesman." After the elections the *Times* continued to instruct Lincoln and the country. It quoted Lincoln's speeches to show that he opposed extension of slavery to the territories, but that "upon all other points" he would be "tolerant and considerate of the rights and interests of the Southern States."[2] As the southern states moved toward secession, the *Times* continued to find union sentiment strong in the South, while Horace Greeley in the New York *Tribune* advised letting the "erring sisters" depart in peace. At the same time Thurlow Weed, political boss of New York and editor of the Albany *Journal*, strove to organize conservative and conciliatory opinion among Republican leaders. In December Weed invited governors in the East to confer with him on the proper attitude of the Republican party.

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[1] *The New York Times*, Jan. 3, 1861.

[2] *The New York Times*, Nov. 6, 8, 1860.

These were all the voices of conservatism, and by New Year's Day of 1861 the signs and portents of the moment might indeed have seemed to *The New York Times* to warrant an optimistic horoscope. But the conservatives reckoned without the new stars arising in the political heavens. The governors whom Thurlow Weed called into conference were already in office. Some of them, in fact, were retiring from their posts. More significant were the new governors of the northern states, themselves products of the elections of 1860, who were far better fitted to be spokesmen of the Republican party. None of the conservatives had bothered to consult them.

The elections of 1860 had hinged largely on state campaigns. Neither the weak Republican national committee nor Lincoln's inarticulate leadership had directed the Republican party to victory. Local politicians working under state machines mustered sufficient votes to carry Republican governors into office; the governors and the state organizations had carried Lincoln into the White House. After the oratory and parades of 1860, five new Republican governors emerged victorious. In the crucial states of Massachusetts, Pennsylvania, Indiana, Illinois, and Michigan, new governors brought new mandates from the people.

In Massachusetts the campaign of 1860 brought an unpredicted reversal of a growing tendency toward conservatism. For three annual terms Nathaniel P. Banks had been governor of the Bay State. Custom would give him a renomination, and party discipline would force the extremists to support him for reelection. But Banks had an attractive offer to enter business in the West, and he determined to forego the honor. He planned, however, to prevent the nomination of John Albion Andrew, darling of the abolitionists, and devoted disciple of the state's fiery senator, Charles Sumner. Yet the news of Banks's renunciation slipped out, and Andrew got the Republican nomination. His campaign was thorough, and though his opponents denounced him for his defense of John Brown, his fanatical identification with reformist causes, and his personal eccentricities, he won easily. Lincoln, however, ran a thousand votes ahead of Andrew at the polls.

In Michigan, too, radical abolitionism won the day. There Austin Blair, a life-long abolitionist with the zeal of Savonarola, proved an able stump speaker and led an effective campaign. His full powers were required, for the Republican state administration needed issues which would divert attention from its record of financial scandals and corruption. The final count put Blair ahead of Lincoln, and both twenty thousand votes ahead of the Democrats.

Illinois and Indiana were less certainly Republican. The campaign in Illinois, offering two presidential aspirants, did not center around the governorship. Mediocre Richard Yates—"Drunken Dick" to the Democrats—won the

Republican nomination because he was safe in his ideas, secure in his party loyalty, and because he came from the center of a state seriously divided along sectional lines. No one noticed Yates during the campaign. Republican politicians concentrated—when they were not extolling Lincoln—on electing a legislature that would return Lyman Trumbull to the United States Senate. Following a hectic campaign Illinois voters chose Lincoln electors, a bare Republican majority in the legislature, and Yates as governor.

In contrast, the gubernatorial fray in Indiana gave the Hoosier State to Lincoln. Indiana was traditionally a "doubtful" state, and politicians of both parties found the narrow margin profitable. They sent supplications to eastern financial angels, and were usually able to stage dramatic campaigns with the donations. In 1860, with more pageantry than was usual in western states, the Republicans cast Henry S. Lane in the role of moral crusader, excoriating Democratic corruption and ineptitude. Yet everyone in Indiana knew that the drama was only make-believe. Lane in the title role was nominally running for governor, but if Republicans carried the legislature he would go to the United States Senate. In the supporting cast was Oliver P. Morton, candidate for lieutenant governor and understudy for the governorship. Yet the younger Morton was too radical, too extreme in his opinions, for the leading part. Ten thousand dollars from the East helped produce the nearly ten thousand majority votes with which Lane carried the state, and assured Republican success in November.

More vital to the campaign than Indiana, Illinois, Michigan, or Massachusetts—where, after all, Democratic disruption had given measurable reassurance to the Republicans—was Pennsylvania. It was the Keystone State which could open the doors of the capital to Abraham Lincoln. Veteran politicians dreaded defeat in Pennsylvania's October elections as a certain portent of the national election result. And Pennsylvania had no Republican party. The "Peoples Party" which sent delegates to the Republican Convention at Chicago, and which supported Abraham Lincoln for the presidency, was not fully integrated with the Republicans. The iron masters and the manufacturers of Pennsylvania wanted a tariff, and the Peoples party was a symbol of the politicians' intent to concentrate on protection rather than on the more remote issue of slavery extension in the territories. The maintenance of a separate state party—even though it existed in name only—was Pennsylvania's warning that a favorable tariff was the price of adhesion to the Republican program. Yet no harmony united the Pennsylvania party. Intense rivalry and bitter enmity existed between United States Senator Simon Cameron, rival of Lincoln for the Chicago nomination, and Andrew Gregg Curtin, the Peoples party nominee for governor. Cameron's personal machine ignored Curtin in the campaign and New York managers of Republican funds refused to aid Curtin's campaign. Yet Curtin was an energetic campaigner, speaking at least twice in each county, preaching the gospel of salvation through tariff protection. His booming voice and orotund periods, which never quite reached the eagle heights of fancy, caused his hearers to overlook his glaring deficiencies in grammar or substance. While Curtin damned his enemies and proclaimed himself the friend of the common man, his devoted campaign manager built an effective political machine.

Pennsylvania Democrats, unable to avoid the state's one burning issue, were tariff men too. They maintained that the Peoples party was merely the Republican party in disguise, that its victory would bring war to check slavery in the territories and give free homesteads to the West. They gleefully reminded voters that Hannibal Hamlin, Lincoln's running mate, was an old free-trade Free-Soiler. Curtin insisted that his party was unconcerned with slavery or homesteads and was only interested in protection. Pennsylvania voters remembered that in the last Congress Republicans had supported a tariff measure, but they also realized the bargaining value of the Peoples party. In October they cast a thirty thousand majority for Curtin and made Lincoln's election a certainty.[3]

With the campaign over, victorious Republicans watched nervously as South Carolina seceded from the Union and the Gulf States made hurried preparations to follow. In December Congress assembled, heard President James Buchanan's recommendation for compromise, and began futile discussions, punctuated with southern threats and northern bravado. By the turn of the year the burning need was for something more than the hopeful horoscopes cast by journalists; it was for clarification of the Republican attitude and program. The clarification came from the governors who had carried their states and had insured Abraham Lincoln's occupation of the White House.

First of the newly elected Republican governors to be heard was Austin Blair of Michigan. On January 1, 1861, legislators arrived in sleighs at backwoods Lansing to listen to the words of retiring Governor Moses Wisner and incoming Austin Blair. Wisner was going out under a cloud. Corruption—culminating in an absconding state treasurer—had marked his term, and he was under compulsion to find excuses and offer palliation for his regime. He spoke with confusion on state affairs, and turned with relief to national issues, where he launched a diatribe against the South, and advocated immediate measures to stifle treason in its cradle. The Democrats scorned him and the "wicked bombast and defiance" of his transparent device.[4]

Yet they could not so easily dismiss the bombastic and defiant speech of incoming Austin Blair. Unlike Wisner, Blair advised economy in state expenditures, and carefully reviewed the wreckage which Republican corruption and the panic of 1857 had combined to make of state finance. But the routine business of a near-bankrupt state made no emotional impact on either the governor or his listeners. He, too, turned quickly from statecraft to statesmanship. Tall and gaunt, an ascetic in appearance with the fanatic gleam of a zealot in his eye, Blair brought a consecrated intensity to the task of exorcising another's sin. His rasping voice filled the small state house with denunciations of secession.

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[3] William B. Hesseltine, *Lincoln and the War Governors* (New York, 1948), pp. 74–91.

[4] George N. Fuller, ed., *Messages of the Governors of Michigan* (Lansing, 1925–1927), II, 376–413.

He approached the problem of the national crisis from the emotionally sure ground of the liberties of Michigan citizens. Southern secessionists protested loudly against the personal liberty laws which northern states enacted to obstruct the operation of the Fugitive Slave Law. The emotions evoked by this conflict of laws bore no relationship to realism. Few fugitives fled from the slave states, and fewer still ever found sanctuary behind the personal liberty laws of the free states. Nor were free Negroes in the North in any real danger of being kidnaped and spirited away to the cotton plantations. Furthermore, in Michigan, remote from the South, far from the supposed routes of the largely imaginary "Underground Railroad," and with the barest handful of free Negroes, the personal liberty issue was especially fictitious. Yet fiction suited Blair's purpose—as it suited South Carolina's—and realism went by the board.

Michigan, proclaimed Blair in words which might have come out of Charleston itself, was a "sovereign and independent State." Her "first and highest duty is to guard the rights and liberties of her people." But his conclusions were not South Carolina's. Michigan was protecting her citizens from the tyrannical operation of a South-inspired act by her personal liberty law. Furthermore, the measure was "altogether her own affair," and Blair denied any "obligation to justify her conduct in this regard . . ." to the South. Regarding the Fugitive Slave Law, Blair strongly denied that Michigan's personal liberty law checked its enforcement. If the South believed such laws unconstitutional, the new governor proclaimed, "then the Courts of the United States are open to them, to have them so declared."[5]

But Blair doubted if Southerners would take the path of peaceful trial. He pointed out that the demand for repeal was coupled with the threat of disunion, and indignantly continued, "I am not willing that the State should be humiliated by compliance with this demand, accompanied by threats of violence and war." If Michigan acted thus "the judgment of the country will be that it is done under the smarting of the Southern lash . . ." Then, shifting the burden of guilt to the South and leaving Michigan standing proud and righteous, he insisted his state should wait "until the Cotton States repeal their unjust and unconstitutional laws" by which citizens of free states "are sold into hopeless slavery." Rejecting concession, the uncompromising executive appealed to the citizens for "patriotic firmness and decision."

But Blair was not through when he merely defended Michigan liberty against South Carolina slavery. Greater issues were involved. Since he was the first new official spokesman of the Republican position, the whole question of secession rested heavily upon him. "Secession," he said, evoking the spirit of Daniel Webster, was "revolution." Personally—and there was scorn in his words—he would let South Carolina—"that restless, heady little nation" —leave the Union forever. But the country could not do that "without admitting the right of secession to exist in all the States." However much he could insist that Michigan was a sovereign state, he could not admit the right of a sovereign and independent state to secede. "The Union must be preserved"—so spoke Andrew Jackson—"and the laws enforced." "It is a question of war that the seceded States have to look in the face."

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[5] John Robertson, *Michigan in the War* (Lansing, 1880), pp. 11–12; Fuller, II, 439–440.

He proposed that the legislature immediately notify Congress that "Michigan is loyal to the Union, the Constitution and the Laws, and will defend them to the uttermost . . ." and offer to the president "the whole military power of the State for that purpose."

Yet Blair did not forget that he was the first man elected in 1860 to assume office in the United States. He could commit Michigan to a stand, but he had the even larger task of committing the noncommittal Lincoln. The president-elect clearly stood more in need of instruction than the Michigan legislature. The governor raised his voice and turned his head toward Springfield. "Oh!" he cried. "Oh, for the firm, steady hand of a Washington, or a Jackson, to guide the Ship of State in this perilous storm. Let us hope that we shall find him on the 4th of March."[6]

As Austin Blair was elaborating his argument against southern assaults on Michigan citizens and rejecting any thought of compromise, Missouri, too, was inaugurating a new governor. A border state, created under a cloud of sectional strife, Missouri held within her boundaries partisans of both North and South. Division had had long nourishment in Missouri. Party rivalries extending back to Andrew Jackson's times when Thomas Hart Benton ruled Missouri had helped split the Democratic ranks. Later when Benton broke with President James K. Polk and his southern supporters, Polk's Missouri followers had disrupted the state's Democratic party. By 1860 Frank Blair, son of Jackson's impetuous editor, Francis Preston Blair, had led the remnants of the Bentonites into the folds of the newly created Republican party. Missouri's new Democratic governor, Claiborne Fox Jackson, had long contended with the Bentonites and had gained his first political reputation through a feud with Benton. But the 1860 tally from Missouri also revealed a victory for Frank Blair's radical and abolitionist Republicans in St. Louis. They carried the city, sent Blair to the United States Congress, and continued to sabotage Jackson's plans for the future of Missouri.

Governor Jackson was no moderate. Although chief executive of a border state, he strongly believed that Missouri's interest lay with the seceding states. Like Michigan's Blair, Jackson had no intention of counseling compromise in

[6] Robertson, p. 11; Fuller, II, 437–442.

his inaugural—but his fiery utterances supported southern rather than northern assumptions. Long years on the hustings had trained him as an orator and earned him recognition as a stump speaker. He proposed to use his inaugural to prepare the people for secession, and to warn the president-elect that Missouri's loyalty to the Union could not be purchased without sacrifice.

Jackson's theme was economic, and he dwelt long on the Black Republican threat to the economic interests of Missouri. Ignoring the solemn Republican assertions that their party contemplated no attack on slavery where it existed, Jackson fulminated against wild schemes of aggrandizement designed to destroy Missouri's wealth. He reminded his audience that "the estimated value of slave property now within the limits of the State falls but little, if any, short of one hundred millions of dollars." "Are we prepared," he asked rhetorically, "to annihilate a hundred million of capital, or can we maintain a solitary isolated position, as a slave holding State shut out from all access to the ocean, and flanked on either side by States who . . . would look upon us with either hostility or distrust?" The question not only prompted visions of horrible impoverishment but stimulated Missourians to consider uniting with the secession movement—even then gaining momentum south of her borders.

But Missouri's people and politicians were still divided on the slave issue, and Jackson, however much he believed that Missouri's interests and sympathies were with the South, could not ignore the strength of union sentiment among his constituents. He carefully avoided the appearance of dismissing lightly the value of national unity. Missouri, he announced, was determined to remain in the Union "so long as there is any hope of its maintaining the guaranties of the Constitution." Yet the Constitution could only operate on principles of equality, and to Missourians equality implied the continued admission of slave states. To deny this concept would have kept Missouri from the Union in 1820. "If," Jackson threatened, "the Northern States have determined to put the slaveholding States on a footing of *inequality* . . ." admitting "no more slaveholding States into the Union," and persisting in nullifying and perverting the Constitution in reference to slave property, then "they themselves, practically abandoned the Union," and could not expect the South to submit to such a government. These were phrases as strong as Blair's, and his inflexibility—in the face of an equally adamant North—could only mean war.

He saw no hope in congressional compromise. The aggressive North had violated every compromise agreement that temporizing congressmen had made. He would accept only a constitutional guarantee that would forever protect the "just rights" of the South. He proposed calling a southern convention to formulate protective constitutional amendments to which the North must agree.

In preparation for a positive assertion of the rights of the South, Jackson called for a Missouri convention to ascertain the views of her people. Finally, ending on a note of defiant realism, he demanded the preparation of the state's militia to repel any forthcoming invasion.[7]

Jackson, like Austin Blair in Michigan, was speaking to Springfield, truculently asserting that his was the voice of Missouri, and warning the president-elect that Black Republicans must respect Missouri's economic interests. Yet neither Jackson nor Blair permitted realistic analysis to obstruct their flow of words or mar their polemics. The number of free Negroes protected by Michigan's personal liberty law was exactly equal to the number of Missouri slaves who would be snatched from their owners by Lincoln's slave stealers. In each state the incoming governor was casting an oratorical horoscope, prophesying from dark portents existing only in his imagination, and predicting a dire future from a biased view of both the past and the present. Each emphasized crisis, each struck the chilling chord of fear, each spoke with an assurance unclouded by moderation or objectivity.

While Austin Blair was whipping up war sentiment in Michigan, and Claiborne F. Jackson was urging Missouri militiamen to prepare for action, Nathaniel P. Banks, the outgoing governor of Massachusetts, lent his support to moderation. For three years Banks had been governor of the Bay State, and its legislators gave an unprecedented permission for him to deliver a valedictory address. In the speech, the outgoing governor opposed what he knew were the radical views of Governor-elect John A. Andrew. Banks was not more realistic in his analysis than Blair or Jackson had been, but he hid a politician's instinct for conciliation under the form of verbal compromise. His proposals touched no fundamental issue, but they brushed aside a host of emotion-laden words.

He proposed to repeal Massachusetts' personal liberty law, for, while it did not violate the Constitution, its repeal would show Massachusetts to be reasonable and conciliatory, and South Carolina aggressive and war-mongering. But, he continued, "I cannot consent that we should yield what belongs to us. The right to the Territories . . . must be a common right; and their *status* should be determined upon the rights of men, and not upon privileges of property." For Banks never forgot that radicalism had made deep inroads in the Bay State. The retiring governor could ill appear to yield to southern interests. "There can be no peaceable secession of States," he proclaimed. Regardless of the nature of the government, he affirmed, "it is, nevertheless, a government, and cannot be dissolved at the bidding of any disaffected party. . . ."

Banks spoke before most Americans were reconciled to war. The ravings of self-interested politicians cried for blood but many, in more sober mood, still hoped to avert the cataclysm. To such in Massachusetts Banks offered renewed optimism. He denied that war was imminent, he added a note of conciliation, and he hoped "that the lapse of time alone, will heal all dissensions . . ." The outgoing governor refused to fan the flames of radicalism, and requested no increase in Massachusetts' military force.[8]

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[7] *The New York Times*, Jan. 5, 1861; Buel Leopard and Floyd C. Shoemaker, eds., *The Messages and Proclamations of the Governors of the State of Missouri* (Columbia, Mo., 1922–1951), III, 334–339.

But the voice of moderate Nathaniel Banks was quickly drowned in the roar of Massachusetts radicalism. Governor-elect John Albion Andrew delighted in moral causes. When only fifteen, he saw a copy of William Lloyd Garrison's *Liberator* and promptly became an abolitionist. In college he organized a peace society and added his youthful enthusiasm to the school's antislavery society. Afterward he studied and practiced law along with his political activities. Untidy and overweight, with curly blond hair and bright blue eyes, Andrew made up in eccentricity what he lacked in attractiveness. He openly endorsed John Brown at a time when many a Massachusetts abolitionist repudiated the fanatic's acts, and he strongly defended the martyr before a congressional committee. Andrew's closest friend was Senator Charles Sumner, and together the pair of zealots helped maneuver the Massachusetts Republican party toward the extremes of radicalism and away from the moderation and indecision of Nathaniel Banks. Andrew thought Banks's message "execrable," but, he hastened to add, "it doesn't disturb my soul at all."[9]

Before his inauguration Andrew had traveled to Washington to confer with radical leaders and to sniff out the air of treason surrounding the capital. While some congressional leaders worked long hours over compromise measures, a radical coterie fell victim to hysteria, and tried to infect others with it. In the minds of the extremists rumored plans to assassinate Lincoln and seize Washington by force were magnified into deep-laid southern plots. When a Virginia congressman, John Y. Mason, swore to Andrew that the South would never rejoin a Union which included an unrepentant Massachusetts, it corroborated the frantic abolitionist's most terrifying apprehensions. A Christmas Eve conference of Andrew and Senators James R. Doolittle of Wisconsin, Lyman Trumbull of Illinois, and Charles Sumner and Henry Wilson of his own Massachusetts decided that the integrity of the Union had to be preserved, "though it cost a million lives." Democratic editors questioned whether men wished to die for the radical cause.[10]

Conservative distrust did not ruffle defiant John Andrew. Although inauguration day brought the furies of a New England blizzard, the new governor delivered his message of bold challenge to the South. After enumerating the blessings of Massachusetts—its wealth, its freedom from debt, its prosperous farms, banks, and scientific institutions—he turned to the subject of abolition. To John Andrew slavery had only one aspect. It was a moral issue, and like a true religious enthusiast he opposed the sin with all the energy at his command. He strove to present a clear-cut picture of northern innocence and southern bestiality. Personal liberty laws, John Andrew proclaimed, were a positive good, and he vigorously refuted the arguments set forth by his predecessor. He vividly described how the Massachusetts statute had rescued free Negroes from the horrors of slavery.

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[8] William Schouler, *A History of Massachusetts in the Civil War* (Boston, 1868–1871), I, 5–8; New York *Daily Tribune*, Jan. 4, 1861; *Valedictory Address of His Excellency Governor Banks, to the Two Branches of the Legislature of Massachusetts, January 3, 1861*, Massachusetts *Senate Document* No. 1, 1861, pp. 24–37.

[9] Henry Greenleaf Pearson, *The Life of John A. Andrew, Governor of Massachusetts, 1861–1865* (Boston, 1904), I, 137.

[10] Pearson, I, 133–136; *The New York Times*, Dec. 25, 1860; New Hampshire *Patriot*, Jan. 2, 1861.

Politicians of Andrew's persuasion did not question the efficacy of war against the South. In December Andrew had told Montgomery Blair that there must be no "weak-kneed" measures. "I am," he boasted, "for unflinching firmness in adhering to . . . all our principles."[11] Such an attitude, when coupled with the unyielding mental condition of some southern spokesmen, made recourse to arms almost inevitable. Yet radical speakers would not appear to delight in the prospects of the coming bloodshed. The conditioning for war was not to be construed as a step toward war. For the carnage, if it came to pass, only the slavocracy with its unreasoning temper was to blame. Dramatically, the conscientious Andrew turned to the "condition of the country."

The Bay State people were proud of their historic traditions. Patriotic historians periodically reminded them of the state's record in the never-ending fight for freedom from the landing at Plymouth Rock to the extension of financial and moral support to John Brown's raid at Harper's Ferry. This was the history told in Fourth of July orations and political harangues. And in the story—as in all history based upon the bias of local pride—Massachusetts had ever been just. Now her patient and long-suffering citizens faced new affronts to her dignity and new threats to her dearly purchased free institutions. Andrew reminded the people of Massachusetts' splendid historical record, and added the list of wrongs, from the Fugitive Slave Law to the secession of South Carolina, which she had suffered.

In the circumstances, John Andrew conveniently forgot Massachusetts' recalcitrance in the War of 1812 and the Bay State's part in the Hartford Convention. The pronouncements of that meeting would have had an ominously familiar ring in January, 1861, but in the excitement over the South, Hartford could be ignored. After reviewing northern acquiescence to the slavocracy's demands of the past thirty years, Governor Andrew erased the memory of 1814 in one sweeping statement. "Massachusetts," he insisted, had "never wavered" in devotion to the Union and would hold to the Union at whatever cost. He recalled the sacrifices of the Revolution, and proclaimed that Massachusetts would be "willing to make the same sacrifices again, if need be . . ."

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[11] John A. Andrew to Montgomery Blair, Dec. 4, 1860, in William E. Smith, *The Francis Preston Blair Family in Politics* (New York, 1933), I, 509.

Andrew scorned the politicians. He would carry his appeal "directly to the warm hearts and cool heads of the great masses of the people. The men who own and till the soil, who drive the mills and hammer out their own iron and leather on their own anvils and lapstones, and they who . . . reap the rewards of enterprising industry and skill in their varied pursuits of business, are honest, intelligent, patriotic, independent and brave." Such people, he asserted, knew that "simple defeat in an election" was no reason for secession. They knew "that those who declare they will not live peaceably within the Union, do not mean to live peaceably outside of it . . ."

But Andrew's use of history was not restricted to evoking proud memories of Lexington and Concord. The new governor brought to mind a historical picture which sharply outlined Massachusetts' devotion to the Union and also placed South Carolina's portrait in a suitable historical frame. Like Austin Blair, John Andrew found new meaning in Andrew Jackson's famed utterance of 1832. "The people of Massachusetts," he announced with appropriate emphasis, were resolved that "*the Federal Union, it must be preserved!*"

Words alone, John Andrew knew, were not enough to prepare a people for war. Emotions could be roused, but passions cooled quickly unless they were channeled into action. Marching and drilling, the smell of powder, and the sound of martial drums were what people needed to put them in the proper mood. To this end the erstwhile pacifist called on his legislature to put the state militia "on a footing of activity."[12]

The Boston *Post's* Democratic editor labeled the entire address an appeal to passion, combining "the narrowness of a mere lawyer, with the intenseness of a fanatic." It was "sophomoric in style, immature in thought, wretched in argument, and small in political knowledge." Despite such sneers, Governor Andrew continued by word and deed to prepare his state and country for war. Immediately after the inauguration he sent messengers to brave a howling snowstorm to warn the other New England governors of secessionist plots and to urge them to place their states on a war footing.[13]

Just nine days following the fiery oratory of John Andrew's inaugural, Henry S. Lane was sworn in as governor of Indiana. The election of the conciliatory Lane strengthened the hopes of many northern moderates. While the frenzy of John Andrew, Austin Blair, and other uncompromising radicals stirred some to a warlike pitch, many in the North remained unmoved. Many businessmen saw little chance for profit in a war-divided nation, and some politicians clutched the straws of compromise still floating on the sea of extremism. Editor Raymond of *The New York Times* continued as spokesman for moderate northern sentiment. He, as well as other advocates of sectional conciliation, looked upon Lane as their representative in the

[12] Pearson, I, 138–142; New York *Daily Tribune*, Jan. 7, 1861; *Address of His Excellency John A. Andrew, to the Two Branches of the Legislature of Massachusetts, January 5, 1861*, Massachusetts *Senate Document* No. 2, 1861, pp. 8, 26–47.

[13] Boston *Post*, Jan. 8, 1861; Pearson, I, 143.

Middle West. Editor Raymond believed Lane "sagacious, prudent, economical . . . apt of speech, of courage not to be trifled with, and integrity that no man suspects."[14]

At an earlier victory celebration, Governor Lane argued for a conciliatory attitude toward the misguided secessionists. In his inaugural address he echoed those moderate sentiments. Like Banks of Massachusetts, Henry Lane fully understood the importance of emotionally charged symbols in the sectional struggle. As a Westerner he had seen ambitious politicians use the well-publicized "underground railroad" as a thoroughfare to political emolument. But he also understood the effects of such agitation on the South. Lane recommended "a voluntary and prompt repeal of all State legislation . . . contrary to the letter or spirit of the Constitution," as a "peace-offering worthy of a great, intelligent and free people." Going even further, Governor Lane admitted his state's willingness to yield "cheerfully and promptly to" the other states "all their just rights as equals under the Constitution," though he expected the rights of Indiana's citizens to be likewise respected.[15]

But all observers knew that Lane was merely filling in. His appointment to the United States Senate was already decided and the chief actor in the drama was to be a much more radical spokesman. Oliver P. Morton's views on the question of the day had already been thoroughly aired at the same November rally where Lane had made pleas for moderation. The young Morton, then lieutenant governor-elect, was trained in the law and rested his arguments for strong action on legal precepts. To northern moderates who deplored talk of coercing South Carolina back into the Union he replied, "What is coercion but the enforcement of the law?" Even more dangerous were moderate assertions that Southerners, too, were helpless victims of their extremist policymakers, and that considerable conciliatory sentiment still existed in the South. For men like Morton this held no weight. Individual responsibility, he continued, cannot "hide behind the forms of State government. . . ."

The secessionists of the South justified their course on a theory of the Constitution which lawyer Morton proceeded to demolish. Southern leaders asserted that the United States was still a federal Union, and that the states retained their sovereignty, which could not be destroyed. They had merely loaned a portion of the precious substance to the larger governmental unit; but when the state no longer found the relationship profitable it was her right, as a sovereign unit, to withdraw. Such thinking was anathema to Morton and other Republican partisans who had abandoned their earlier devotion to state's rights with the electoral victory of 1860. Morton explained that for the president to recognize South Carolina's independence would be to avoid his duty. Side-stepping the Tenth Amendment, which guaranteed a residue of sovereignty to the states, Morton chose to use that part of the

[14] Nov. 15, 1860.

[15] Indiana *Senate Journal*, 1861, pp. 56–57.

Constitution which provided for the admission of new states. The Constitution, he commented, allowed the admission of new states but made no provision for discharging them, a significant omission. Since Congress had no power to recognize the southern states' independence, the only course open was to "compel an observance of the laws and force submission to Constitutional obligations." South Carolina's acts were only the beginning. Her success would signal a general exodus and mark the disintegration of the Union.

But Morton did not limit himself to constitutional arguments. Like Jackson in Missouri, he placed his cause on economic grounds, but trade relations rather than slave property was the issue in the Hoosier State. He too cast a horoscope which painted the imagined terrors of economic isolation. Moreover, he predicted that an unchecked secession movement would create a Pacific empire within a year. A disintegrated Union, he reminded the state's businessmen, would result in "political, intellectual, social and commercial death" for Indiana.

Force, Morton assured the people of his state, could check the secession movement at its birth. Few states, he predicted, would join South Carolina if they had to meet force. The nation had been conceived in war and Morton reminded his listeners of the initial flow of blood for the cause of freedom. "If it was worth a bloody struggle to establish this nation, it is worth one to preserve it . . ." The Revolution had lasted seven years and he preferred another seven years of war to a purchased peace.

These were the words of the acting governor of Indiana. Instead of the moderate pleas of Henry S. Lane, the elected executive, Indiana's capitol would echo the threats and challenges of Oliver P. Morton. Indiana newspapers rejoiced, and the rising tide of extremism was not unheeded in Springfield. Rumor had it that Abraham Lincoln said of Morton's speech "it covers the whole ground, and declares the necessary policy of the government."[16]

The same day that Henry S. Lane uttered his futile plea for reconciliation in Indiana, another long-awaited voice spoke from Lincoln's own bailiwick. Richard Yates, governor-elect of Illinois, delivered his inaugural address on January 14. "Drunken Dick," as the Democrats called him, was a veteran Illinois politician who had entered the Republican ranks through the door of Whiggery. During his one term in Congress Yates had joined fellow Whigs in fighting the repeal of the Missouri Compromise, but charges of Know-Nothingism prevented his reelection. After his defeat Yates practiced law, took care of railroad interests, and waited a chance for new political rewards. In 1860 he gained the Republican nomination for governor.[17]

Yates's strategic position was well understood in political circles. Although he played only a minor role in the campaign of 1860, his January performance set him briefly in the spotlight. By January 14, Mississippi, Florida, and Alabama had joined South Carolina in secession, and at conventions soon to be held, other Gulf States were almost certain to decide to unite with them. The time was propitious, and Yates's pronouncements were given added importance. Believing he expressed the ideas of the new president, many listened carefully to his words. Yates did not formulate his concepts without the advice of others. Some wrote to him, among them a former congressional colleague who implored moderation and expressed hope that Lincoln would also be conservative. Another adviser, writing in a different vein, declared "the die is cast and . . . blood must flow before this *treason of the South* comes to an end." Influential, too, among Yates's self-constituted advisers was Senator Lyman Trumbull, who recognized clearly the need to consolidate the Republican gains. "It seems to me," the radical senator wrote to Yates, "it would have an excellent effect on the public mind just now for you to take strong Union ground in your message and repudiate the idea of secession being anything else than revolution and rebellion." He further suggested the wisdom of having the Illinois legislature second these views unanimously at an "early day" and pledge "the men and means of the whole state . . . to maintain the Constitution."[18]

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[16] William M. French, *Life, Speeches, State Papers and Public Services of Oliver P. Morton* (Cincinnati, 1864), pp. 112–121; William Dudley Foulke, *Life of Oliver P. Morton* (Indianapolis and Kansas City, 1899), I, 96.

[17] Hesseltine, p. 46.

Governor Yates took "strong Union ground" and delivered an address pleasing to the most extreme radicals. As befitted his legal background, Yates, like Morton, appealed to the nation's highest legal document. He argued devotion to law, the sacredness of the Constitution, and the necessity of accepting the decisions of the ballot box. He listed two propositions agreeable to Illinois citizens: first, that "obedience to the Constitution and laws must be insisted upon," and second, that the election of a president by Constitutional methods "is no sufficient cause for the release of any state from any of its obligations to the Union."

But Yates was more politician than lawyer, and his legal disquisition quickly led into paths of partisanship and patronage. For more than thirty years—except for two terms—Democratic presidents had occupied the White House. Now with a mandate from the people, the new victors could claim the plums and crumbs of patronage. Governor Yates assured faithful party workers that "the American people need no assurance that the Republican party . . . will never be disposed to yield its honors or avoid its duties. They not only claim, but intend to have the administration for the period of time allotted to them by the Constitution."

Moreover, Yates, like Morton in Indiana, struck the chords of economic anxieties. Free passage of the Mississippi had been a historic issue in the West since the earliest days of the Republic. "Can it be for a moment supposed," asked Yates, "that the people of the Valley of the Mississippi will ever consent that the great river shall flow for hundreds of miles through a foreign jurisdiction . . . ?" Never would they permit the South to depart in peace. "All the running waters of the Northwest," he proudly proclaimed, "are waters of freedom and Union; and come what will, as they glide to the great gulf, they will ever . . . bear only free men and free trade upon their bosoms, or their channels will be filled with the commingled blood of traitors, cowards and slaves."

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[18] John L. Taylor to Richard Yates, Dec. 12, 1860, S. C. Fuller to Yates, Dec. 30, 1860, and Lyman Trumbull to Yates, Dec. 19, 1860 (Richard Yates Papers, Illinois State Library).

Words from the governor of Lincoln's state gained special significance. Throughout the land men searched Yates's address for hints of Lincoln's policies, and Yates, with full knowledge of the anxiety of his audience, predicted Lincoln's course. "The administration of the incoming president, I have no doubt, will be characterized by wisdom as well as firmness. . . . He will never forget, so long as he remembers his official oath, that the whole material of the Government, moral, political, and physical, if need be, must be employed to preserve, protect and defend the Constitution of the United States." Warning southern sympathizers in lower regions of his state, the executive added, "To those who would distrust the loyalty of the American people to the Union, let the spontaneous response of the national heart, borne upon ten thousand streams of lightning to the heroic Anderson, answer."

The answer, he was sure, would be right, and the "union of intelligence, of freedom, of justice, of industry, of religion, of science and art, will, in the end, be stronger and richer and more glorious, renowned and free . . . by the necessary reaction of the crisis through which we are passing."[19]

Thus from the newly elected governors, chosen by the same ballots that had sent Lincoln to the White House, the country heard a concerted demand for war. Together Blair and Andrew, Yates and Morton had rung the changes on the arguments against compromise and in favor of coercion. Austin Blair had held aloft the banner of freedom, John Andrew had glorified war and argued for coercion, Oliver Morton and Richard Yates had marshaled the economic reasons for preserving the Union. With one voice they had repudiated compromise, pronounced anathema upon South Carolina, and promised the lives of their constituents to uphold the results of the election.

Yet in the midst of this bloody accord came one discordant note from a man and a state that could not be ignored. The Republican proponents of war could ignore the temporizing counsels of retiring Governor Banks or the conciliatory tones of temporary-Governor Lane as easily as they could dismiss the Democratic truculence of Missouri's Governor Jackson, but they could not overlook the failure of Pennsylvania's Governor Andrew Gregg Curtin to join the chorus. Governor Curtin took office on January 15, the day after Lane and Yates delivered their inaugurals, and as the last of the new governors he held a strategic position.

Moderates and radicals alike looked to Curtin to strengthen their opposing

[19] Illinois *Senate Journal*, 1861, pp. 68–77; Thomas M. Eddy, *The Patriotism of Illinois* (Chicago, 1865), I, 86–89.

causes. Radicals hoped for another fiery oration, filled with redundant rhetoric, but adding up to a battle cry. On the other hand the conservative *New York Times* predicted that the Pennsylvania governor would recommend "repealing all laws conflicting with Federal authority . . ." and favor "the exhaustion of all means for conciliation and peace before force is resorted to . . ." Andrew Curtin disappointed them both, and delivered a message which was a model of political vacillation.

The night before his inauguration Curtin was still undecided on the content of his message. Fully cognizant of pressures from war-minded radicals and temperate political leaders, the newly elected executive called in his advisers to help frame his address. Long into the night five close friends worked with Curtin, writing and rewriting the important speech to be delivered the following day. Together they wrote a masterpiece of political fence-straddling. The reason was clear: Pennsylvania wanted a tariff, and the Morrill bill was the price which Curtin demanded from the victors. Throughout the campaign, laying stress upon the tariff rather than on expansion of slavery, Lincoln supporters in Pennsylvania had maintained the transparent fiction of the "Peoples Party." When the votes were counted, both parties conceded that the tariff issue had carried the state. And, as the first act after his election, Curtin went into Massachusetts to tell the supporters of John Andrew that the Pennsylvania victory was solely the result of the tariff. Protection was the price of Pennsylvania support, and Curtin's advisers used his address to give a new emphasis to their single-minded demand.[20]

On inauguration day Curtin acknowledged his pledge to protect liberty as it came from the Fathers, "to stand between it and encroachments, whether instigated by hatred or ambition, by fanaticism or folly." After reviewing matters of state concern he turned to the national scene. He deplored that the "mutual estrangement" which had developed between the sections, had been caused by the "precipitate action and violent denunciation of heated partisans . . ." Apprehension of still more serious complications had the "effect of weakening commercial credit and partially interrupting trade." The election of Lincoln he declared only an excuse for secession. Then the newly elected executive denied that Pennsylvanians had any "hostility to our brethren of other States. We regard them as friends and fellow countrymen . . . and we recognize . . . all our constitutional obligations to them." As an added gesture of conciliation Curtin conceded that if any laws on the Pennsylvania statute books "infringe upon the rights of the people of any of the States . . . they ought to be repealed." He reminded his constituents that Pennsylvania was a rich border state, and that when they had, at times, been dissatisfied with the national government they had nevertheless stayed in the Union. The executive strongly denied the right of secession, affirming "it is the first duty of the national authorities to stay the progress of anarchy and enforce the laws, and Pennsylvania, with a united people, will give them an honest, faithful, and active support."

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[20] New York *Herald*, Oct. 16, 1860; Harrisburg *Patriot*, Oct. 18, 25, Nov. 1, 8, 22, 1860.

Pennsylvania was clearly upon the auction block, as both radicals and conservatives understood. Turning at last to the subject closest to his listeners' hearts, Curtin directed his words toward Congress and argued for Pennsylvania's primary concern, a protective tariff. Finally, Governor Curtin spoke of Pennsylvania's willingness to unite with all the loyal states to propose "just and honorable measures of conciliation. . . ." He did not request an increase in the state's militia.[21]

The reactions to Governor Curtin's inaugural were mixed. Perhaps neither side was content to extend the bribe demanded. The New York *Daily Tribune*, wavering at the moment in the demand for war, thought it a "manly and temperate address, conciliatory but firm, pledging Pennsylvania to support, at all hazards, the Union and the Federal government." The Democratic New York *World*, hoping to save Pennsylvania for conciliation, emphasized Curtin's "courage and vigor" and wrote of the speech as "a staunch and manly document." Clearly, of course, there were elements of moderation in the talk. Curtin, the last of the new governors to speak, was also the one most willing to compromise, but his compromise had a price.

In the end, the radicals won. The conservatives did not control Congress, and as the southern representatives withdrew, it became easier for the men of war to pass the Morrill Act. The situation was cynically summed up by Roger Pryor of Virginia. "The importunate protectionists of Pennsylvania," he said, "more clamorous and insatiable than the daughter of the horseleech, after higgling with every party for a stipend from the treasury, at last caught the Republicans in a moment of exigent need, and from their lust for place extorted the promise of a bounty to iron."[22]

In the end, too, Curtin's moderation was discounted and his voice stilled. There were left only the voices of those who demanded military coercion. War, John Andrew later admitted, was "in the air, and some of us breathed it." It was Andrew and his fellow incoming governors who rode the wave of the future and spoke with the authority of a newly empowered political group. They, rather than the moderates, saw the political potentialities of taking strong Union ground. Their voices drowned out the pleas of the compromisers.

[21] William H. Egle, *Andrew Gregg Curtin: His Life and Services* (Philadelphia, 1895), pp. 39, 113–122; A. K. McClure, *Old Time Notes of Pennsylvania* (Philadelphia, 1905), I, 445–449; New York *Tribune*, Jan. 15, 1861.

[22] Thomas M. Pitkin, "The Tariff and the Early Republican Party," unpub. diss. (Western Reserve Univ., 1935), Ch. VII.

*The Washington Peace Conference of 1861**

ROBERT GRAY GUNDERSON

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After a lecture tour through New England during the tense days of the secession winter, Carl Schurz optimistically noted "the symptoms of a rising fighting spirit."[1] In Boston, advocates of preventive war urged Governor John A. Andrew to "drive the ruffians into the Gulf of Mexico and give the country to the negroes."[2] Two days before Christmas, radical Republican leaders met in the Washington quarters of Francis P. Blair, Sr., and "unanimously agreed that the integrity of the Union should be preserved, though it cost a million lives."[3] Throughout the North, "no-compromise men" were indeed afflicted with what one conservative Republican diagnosed as a "Yankee type of secession fever."[4] On February 16, two days before his inaugural as President of the Confederacy, Jefferson Davis replied by promising "to maintain our position and make all who oppose us smell Southern powder and feel Southern steel."[5] Both north and south of the Ohio, extremists made psychological and military preparations for civil war.

Confronted with a rising tide of hysteria, moderate leaders looked for means of securing a negotiated adjustment. Conservatives in the Border States, particularly in Virginia and Kentucky, grew impatient with congressional bickering over compromises in the House Committee of Thirty-Three and the Senate Committee of Thirteen and looked for other possible constitutional solutions to problems confronting the rapidly dividing country. On January 19 the Virginia legislature issued an invitation to "all such States,

* The Director of the University of Wisconsin Press has graciously permitted the author to republish portions of his *Old Gentlemen's Convention: The Washington Peace Conference of 1861* (Madison, Wisconsin, 1961).

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[1] Carl Schurz to Abraham Lincoln, Dec. 18, 1861 (Robert Todd Lincoln Collection, Library of Congress).

[2] T. P. Chandler to John A. Andrew, Jan. 6, 1861 (John A. Andrew MSS., Massachusetts Historical Society).

[3] *The New York Times*, Dec. 25, 1860.

[4] M. B. Anderson to Thurlow Weed, Feb. 8, 1861 (Thurlow Weed Collection, Univ. of Rochester Library).

[5] Albany *Atlas & Argus*, Feb. 19, 1861.

whether slaveholding or non-slaveholding, as are willing to unite with Virginia in an earnest effort to adjust the present unhappy controversies." The resolution suggested that the compromise of Senator John J. Crittenden of Kentucky should "constitute the basis of such an adjustment."[6]

Northern and southern extremists rejected Virginia's call for a convention. Republican state administrations in Michigan, Minnesota, and Wisconsin refused to send delegates. "Concession and compromise," declared the Michigan legislature, "are not to be entertained or offered to traitors."[7] Secessionists likewise opposed the gathering. As the New Orleans *Picayune* pointed out, the seven seceded states "no longer [had] the capacity to vote as States in the Union."[8] In Tennessee, Missouri, and North Carolina legislatures heatedly debated the alternative of sending representatives to Montgomery, but eventually concluded to join Virginia in a final attempt at negotiation.[9] Virginia's invitation was received with greatest enthusiasm in those areas where the economic consequences of secession were most feared, the Border States and the northern commercial centers. As abolitionist Wendell Phillips noted, Union sentiment was fostered by "the clink of coin—the whistle of spindles, the dust of trade."[10]

In all, 132 delegates from 21 states convened from February 4 to 27 at Willard's Hotel in Washington for what came to be known as "the Peace Conference." Some delegates owed their appointments to their respective state governors and others to their legislatures, but all held official credentials duly certified by administrative authorities of the several states. Among them were many who had once held positions of importance: a former president of the United States, six former cabinet members, nineteen former governors, fourteen former United States senators, fifty former congressmen, five former ministers or ambassadors, ten circuit judges, and twelve state supreme court justices. Many were prominent old-line Whigs. Eleven members had served with Lincoln in the Thirtieth Congress, and five of the southern delegates had sat with him on the Whig side of the aisle. Unimpressed by this array of the onetime great, Horace Greeley damned the gathering as an "Old Gentlemen's Convention" of "political fossils."[11]

At noon on February 4, former Governor Charles S. Morehead of Kentucky called some sixty delegates to order for the opening session. "Their appearance," one delegate observed, "was grave and their deportment extremely sedate."[12] Judge John C. Wright of Ohio was named temporary chairman, a "Committee on Rules and Organization" was appointed, and the conference adjourned to await the arrival of laggards.[13] February 5 was devoted to minor organizational details and the election of former President John Tyler as permanent presiding officer. In taking the chair, Tyler recalled similarities between the assemblage which faced him and the Constitutional Convention of "our god-like fathers." "If you reach the height of this great occasion," he predicted, "your children's children will rise up to call you blessed." "Your patriotism," he concluded, "will surmount the difficulties, however great, if you will but accomplish one triumph in advance, and that is a triumph over *party*."[14] Though few of the delegates, perhaps least of all Tyler himself, had any intention of triumphing over their respective parties, listeners nevertheless were impressed by the address. Those who heard it, said *The New York Times*, "eulogized . . . it as highly patriotic and conciliatory."[15]

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[6] *Journal of the House of Delegates of the State of Virginia for the Extra Session, 1861* (Richmond, 1861), pp. 65–67; *Acts of the General Assembly of the State of Virginia Passed in 1861* (Richmond, 1861), pp. 337–339.

[7] *The New York Times,* Feb. 8, 1861.

[8] New Orleans *Daily Picayune,* Feb. 8, 1861, in Dwight L. Dumond, ed., *Southern Editorials on Secession* (New York, 1931), p. 449.

[9] For a discussion of state selection of delegates, see Robert G. Gunderson, *Old Gentlemen's Convention: The Washington Peace Conference of 1861* (Madison, 1961), pp. 33–42.

[10] *The New York Times,* Nov. 9, 1860.

[11] New York *Semi-Weekly Tribune,* Feb. 1, 8, 1861.

Those who hoped the conference would succeed compared it with that of the Founding Fathers and urged delegates to adopt the rules of the Constitutional Convention. Northern radicals, on the other hand, looked upon the gathering as an illegal or certainly as an extra-legal body. Roger Baldwin, leader of the Connecticut delegation, called it "a *revolutionary proceeding*" for which there was "no sufficient cause or justification."[16] Radical editors, taking their cue from Horace Greeley, dramatized this view to their northern readers. The Kennebec *Journal*, for example, compared the conference to the meeting of Benedict Arnold with Major André.[17] Moderates complained that such charges merely brought the Union "another step toward dissolution." "Among conservative men," observed the Cincinnati *Enquirer*, "the Convention is the hope of the country."[18]

The rules adopted on the third day of the conference reflected the attitudes of the conservatives and were substantially those of the Constitutional Convention. Radicals opposed the rule of secrecy, which was designed to encourage delegates to talk to each other rather than to the newspapers. Insisting that secrecy was "absolutely indispensable to successful action," Charles A. Wickliffe of Kentucky hoped "to have our time used in consultation . . . not consumed in political speech-making." James A. Seddon of Virginia wanted to keep each delegate "free to make . . . concessions, and not subject himself to unfavorable public criticism by doing so."[19] Passage of the secrecy rule was interpreted as a victory for those who placed their faith in frank and full discussion, uninfluenced and uninhibited by the press.

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[12] Samuel Ryan Curtis, MS. Private Journal, Feb. 5, 1861, Illinois State Historical Library.

[13] Lucius E. Chittenden, *A Report of the Debates and Proceedings in the Secret Sessions of the Conference Convention* . . . (New York, 1864), pp. 9–13 (hereafter cited as *Debates*).

[14] *Debates*, pp. 13–17.

[15] Feb. 6, 1861.

[16] *Debates*, pp. 64, 169, 414.

[17] In New York *Semi-Weekly Tribune*, Feb. 15, 1861.

[18] Cincinnati *Enquirer*, Feb. 13, 1861.

Former Secretary of the Treasury James Guthrie of Kentucky initiated the most important feature of convention procedure, a "Committee of One from Each State" charged with the duty of considering proposed resolutions. Although Seddon complained that Guthrie's suggested procedure was contrary to the proposal of the Virginia legislature, the conference adopted it without division.[20] Delegates who were not on the resolutions committee met briefly each day and devoted the remainder of the time to pursuing their own fancies. On February 15, after eleven days of delay, the committee at last made its report, thus enabling delegates to debate specific plans of adjustment.

Although less acceptable than the Crittenden Compromise to most southern delegates, the majority report followed Crittenden's formula in recommending seven articles for a proposed Thirteenth Amendment to the Constitution. Border-state moderates like William C. Rives felt that "everything of substance" was "unequivocally secured": (1) "involuntary service" was to be protected in the territories south of the Missouri Compromise line and prohibited north of it; (2) territory was not to be acquired without ratification by four-fifths of the Senate; (3) Congress was not to interfere with slavery in "the City of Washington" without the consent of Maryland, and it was not to have power to "regulate, abolish, or control" slavery in states where it existed; (4) the Fugitive Slave Law was to be enforced; (5) the importation of slaves was to be "forever prohibited"; (6) the first, second, third, and fifth provisions, and specified articles in the Constitution relating to slavery were not to be amended or abolished without the consent of all the states; (7) slaveholders were to be compensated for fugitives lost through violence or intimidation.[21]

Extremists of both sides denounced the majority proposals. Ardent defenders of southern rights dismissed them as "wishy-washy resolutions, that amount to nothing." Ultra-Republicans, of course, repudiated them as "a total surrender of principles," and endorsed the minority report of Roger

[19] *Debates,* pp. 12, 19, 20–21, 27, 29, 42–43.

[20] *Debates,* pp. 21–23.

[21] Rives made an extensive comparison of the Peace Conference Resolutions and the Crittenden Compromise in William C. Rives, *Speech of Hon. William C. Rives on the Proceedings of the Peace Conference and the State of the Union, delivered in Richmond, Virginia, March 8, 1861* (Richmond, 1861), pp. 3 ff. Crittenden's proposals specifically "recognized" and "protected as property" "slavery of the African race" in territory "now held or hereafter acquired" south of 36° 30′; they permitted territories both north and south of that line to enter the Union "with or without slavery"; and there was to be no abolition of slavery in the District of Columbia without the consent of Virginia as well as Maryland. (*Cong. Globe,* 36th Cong., 2nd Sess., pp. 112–114; *Debates,* pp. 43–45)

Baldwin calling for a national convention as originally suggested by Kentucky.[22] Radicals enthusiastically supported this alternative because it insured delay without forfeiting any of the provisions of their Chicago platform, particularly *Section* 8, denying the authority of Congress "or of any individuals, to give legal existence to Slavery in any Territory of the United States."[23] Guthrie called Baldwin's alternative "a new excuse for inaction" and urged delegates to act first upon the majority report. "If we adopt the gentleman's views, go home and do nothing," Guthrie warned, "we take the responsibility of breaking up the Government."[24]

On behalf of the opposite minority, James A. Seddon reintroduced as "a substitute" the resolutions of the Virginia General Assembly with certain "alternatives" of his own designed to alter drastically the federal system of constitutional government. In order to guarantee southern rights, Seddon proposed what was in effect a southern veto on both legislation and executive appointments. In addition, "persons . . . of the African race" were prohibited from voting or holding office, and states were explicitly granted the right to "dissolve" their relationship with the federal government "and withdraw from the Union."[25]

Six days of parliamentary chaos followed the introduction of these three reports. Although Tyler ruled that the first question would be the substitution of the Baldwin report for that of the majority, delegates failed to limit themselves to this issue, but instead talked about those features of the crisis which concerned them.[26] In the confusion, everyone apparently forgot Tyler's initial ruling. Amendments were appended to amendments and substitutions substituted for substitutions. Sessions were "prolonged, laborious and exciting";[27] and with considerable justification James B. Clay of Kentucky compared proceedings to the "circumlocution office" in Dickens' *Bleak House*.[28]

Ninety-one of the delegates made statements which Lucius E. Chittenden of Vermont recorded with questionable accuracy in a *Report of the Debates* published three years later.[29] Committee Chairman James Guthrie spoke some sixty-one times in favor of the majority proposal. The cadaverous Mr. Seddon argued militantly for southern rights on fifty-three different occasions. Charles A. Wickliffe spoke fifty-one times, and Thomas Ewing, Sr., an unusually effective conciliator, twenty times. Those described as "ultra-Black Republicans" were comparatively less vocal. David Dudley Field, characterized as a "weak-minded fanatic" by the Albany *Atlas & Argus*,[30] led the anticompromise delegation with twenty-nine pronouncements, followed by former Governor Salmon P. Chase of Ohio with twenty-eight and David Wilmot of Pennsylvania with twenty.

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[22] *Debates*, pp. 534, 45–46; New York *Semi-Weekly Tribune*, Feb. 19, 1861.

[23] Reuben Hitchcock to Peter Hitchcock, Jr., Feb. [25?], 1861 (Reuben Hitchcock MSS., Western Reserve Historical Society Library); "Republican Party Platform, Chicago, Illinois, May 16, 1860," in Henry Steele Commager, ed., *Documents of American History* (New York, 1934), p. 364.

[24] *Debates*, p. 70.

[25] *Debates*, pp. 47–52.

[26] *Debates*, p. 55.

[27] *The New York Times*, Feb. 26, 1861.

[28] *Debates*, p. 320.

[29] "A few of the members furnished him with reports of their speeches, but not always in the language used at the time of delivery. My memory of what was said by Mr. Chase and Mr. Frelinghuysen did not correspond with the Chittenden Report." (George S. Boutwell, *Reminiscences of Sixty Years in Public Affairs* [New York, 1902], I, 268.)

Impressed by the grave constitutional crisis, delegates took themselves and their mission very seriously, often asserting that they spoke for their respective states, sections, or economic groups. William C. Noyes, for example, claimed to speak for New York, George S. Boutwell for Massachusetts, Daniel M. Barringer for North Carolina—if not the whole South—and William E. Dodge "for the commercial interests."[31] In a bitter exchange with Francis Granger over who properly represented northern opinion, Noyes announced: "Sir, I speak for New York! . . . Not New York of an old fossiliferous era . . . but young, breathing, living New York, as she exists today."[32] Speakers sometimes used public opinion as a persuasive weapon, claiming that those whom they represented insisted upon a prescribed course of action. "Unless you use language and adopt terms . . . which will satisfy the seceded States," said Barringer ". . . your labors will have been in vain."[33] Commodore Robert Stockton of New Jersey asserted that northern moderates would resist coercion—a remark denounced by the New York *Tribune* as "treasonable."[34]

Members were quick to sense personal or sectional affront; some were pompous and austere, and many were highly sentimental. Although much of their language might well have been taken from currently popular melodrama, apparently it prompted no offense. At least there was no cynical amusement from such a line as, "Little Rhode Island has a heart which beats true to the Union."[35] Chittenden recorded little if any humor, a reflection not only of his own stern outlook, but no doubt also that of his colleagues. Reverdy Johnson of Maryland once made a heavy-handed reference intended as humor, but no humorous response was recorded. "I won't dispute about terms," he told Seddon. "In all such discussions, Heaven save me from a Virginia politician."[36]

Speeches were "earnest, sometimes exciting, but generally conciliatory."[37] Despite a number of sharp interchanges, most delegates reported a general atmosphere of amicability. Baldwin recalled "a pervading spirit of courtesy and conciliation,"[38] while George W. Summers of Virginia limited this "growing spirit of brotherhood" to members from Rhode Island, New Jersey, and "the border states . . . including Illinois and Indiana."[39] As the conference progressed, Reuben Hitchcock noted less rigid attitudes among members of the Ohio delegation,[40] and one radical congressman complained of Republicans who were "melting away from the neck to the os cocygis."[41]

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[30] Mar. 4, 1861.

[31] *Debates*, pp. 110, 128, 294.

[32] *Debates*, p. 128.

[33] *Debates*, p. 294.

[34] *Debates*, p. 116; New York *Semi-Weekly Tribune*, Feb. 22, 1861.

[35] *Debates*, p. 316.

[36] *Debates*, p. 89.

[37] Nashville (Tenn.) *Patriot*, Mar. 3, 1861.

Delegates generally praised the speechmaking of those who agreed with them. In his reports to Governor Andrew, John Z. Goodrich complimented Boutwell's uncompromising reply to Seddon, calling it "the best [speech] that has been made by all odds"; he also liked Baldwin's effort in favor of a national convention and even paid tribute to Reverdy Johnson, who gave "a good speech for a southerner."[42] John W. Brockenbrough of Virginia praised Frederick T. Frelinghuysen's genuinely conciliatory retreat from the Chicago platform;[43] Alexander Doniphan of Missouri lauded the procompromise appeals of William C. Rives, Greene C. Bronson, and Stephen T. Logan; but, like Brockenbrough, he felt that "by far the most eloquent and able speech" was that of Frelinghuysen. "It was," he said, "chaste, logical, learned, highly ornate & abounded in the most lofty appeals to our patriotism." Doniphan nevertheless noted that he had heard "as able speeches as any of them in Weston, Mo. often."[44]

With a surprising impartiality, Chittenden named Seddon "the most powerful debater of the Conference, skilful, adroit, cunning," with an intense "hatred of all forms of Northern life." His "extraordinary" appearance suggested "the last stages of consumption": "the pallor of his face, his narrow chest, sunken eyes, and attenuated frame." "His voice, husky at first," said Chittenden, "cleared with the excitement of debate, in which he became eloquent."[45]

Speakers relied primarily on either ethical or emotional proof, making little if any effort to support their assertions with statistical evidence. Since almost four-fifths of the members were lawyers, they quite naturally looked for legal precedents and wrangled a great deal over the various interpretations of those who framed the Constitution. Some took delight in displaying their erudition. In a long, tedious exposition, Goodrich insisted that the

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[38] R. S. Baldwin to W. A. Buckingham, Mar. 4, 1861 (Samuel G. Buckingham, *The Life of William A. Buckingham* [Springfield, Mass., 1894], p. 90).

[39] George W. Summers, *Speech on Federal Relations Delivered in the Virginia Convention, March 11, 1861* (Richmond, 1861), p. 4.

[40] Reuben Hitchcock to Peter Hitchcock, Jr., Feb. [25?], 1861 (Hitchcock MSS.).

[41] New York *Semi-Weekly Tribune*, Feb. 15, 1861.

[42] J. Z. Goodrich to John Andrew, Feb. 16, 18, 1861 (Andrew MSS.).

[43] *Debates*, p. 281.

[44] A. W. Doniphan to John Doniphan, Feb. 22, 1861, in Frederick A. Culmer, "A Snapshot of Alexander W. Doniphan, 1808–1887," *Missouri Historical Rev.*, XXXVIII (Oct., 1943), 29.

[45] Lucius E. Chittenden, *Recollections of President Lincoln and His Administration* (New York, 1891), pp. 51–52.

"fathers of the Republic" intended to apply the Ordinance of 1787 "to every foot of organized and unorganized territory, wherever situated." At one point Wickliffe exclaimed in exasperation, "No one from Kentucky or Virginia wishes to alter the ordinance of 1787. For God's sake spare us the argument."[46]

Debate focused mainly on slavery and its extension, and on constitutional arrangements designed to maintain political power. No one made a closely reasoned analysis of the economic relationships among the several sections, but some acknowledged the decisive importance of matters such as tariffs and railroads. Clay, for example, found slavery "but an incident to the great questions which are at the bottom of our divisions." "It is, after all," he said, "the old question of the balance of power between the different sections and different interests."[47] Seddon talked bluntly of "the acquisitive disposition" of Northerners, of their greed for land and for office. "The great class of protected interests at the North," he said ". . . joined with the land-seekers to secure power."[48] At the opposite extreme, James Pollock, an ardent tariff Republican from Pennsylvania, protested that antislavery was not "the leading idea in the platform of his party,"[49] and Pleasant A. Hackleman, an Indiana Republican, objected to having "opinions imputed to me and my party which are only entertained by a little knot of fanatical abolitionists."[50]

Slavery, nevertheless, provided delegates with an emotionally charged symbol for rhetorical and political manipulation. The bitter clash between Seddon and Boutwell on February 18 demonstrated the emotional impact of the argument over slavery and its extension. "We hold our *property*, yes, *our property in slaves*, as rightful and as honorable as any property to be found in the broad expanse between ocean and ocean," Seddon insisted. "We feel that in . . . the protection of the African race, we have a mission to perform, and not a mission only but a right and a duty. . . . In all this time we have contributed far more to the greatness of the North than to our own. Yet all this time we have been assailed, attacked, vilified and defamed, by the people of the North. . . . Your people thought they were doing GOD a service in signing a petition . . . for mercy to John Brown and his ruffian invaders of our soil. And when these men met the just reward of their crime. . . . they were looked upon as the victims of oppression, as martyrs to a holy and righteous cause."[51]

Boutwell replied with equal vigor. By his own confession, he "wounded the Southern men sorely" and moved the moderate Mr. Rives to tears.[52] "It is attempted here to put the North on trial," he said of Seddon's speech

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[46] *Debates*, pp. 238, 241.
[47] *Debates*, pp. 320–321.
[48] *Debates*, p. 96. Boutwell, I, 270, called Seddon "the leading man" of the secessionists.
[49] *Debates*, p. 278.
[50] *Debates*, p. 309.
[51] *Debates*, pp. 94–96.
[52] Boutwell, I, 273.

". . . but I have heard no specification of these charges. . . . Massachusetts has made war upon slavery wherever she had the right to do it; but much as she *abhors* the institution, she would sacrifice every thing rather than assail it where she has not the right to assail it. . . . The North will never consent to the separation of the States. . . . If the Slave States will . . . faithfully abide by their constitutional obligations, and remain in the Union until their rights are in *fact* invaded, all will be well. But if they take the responsibility of involving the country in a civil war . . . but one course remains to those who are true to that Government. They must and will defend it at every sacrifice—if necessary, to the sacrifice of their lives."[53]

If in their rhetoric delegates failed to use all possible means of persuasion, it cannot be attributed to any lack of effort. In the hope that perhaps patriotism might hold the Union together, procompromise orators exploited the American heritage with its common national heroes and its Revolutionary comradeship. "There is scarcely a church spire [in New Jersey]," said Frelinghuysen, "beneath whose shadows does not lay [*sic*] the remains of some of the entombed patriots in that great conflict from both these sections, commingled with those of her own sons!"[54] Both Frelinghuysen and James Pollock used the "hearthstone" theme which Lincoln developed more poetically five days after the conference adjourned when he appealed to "the mystic chords of memory stretching from every patriot grave to every heart and hearthstone, all over this broad land. . . ."[55] Stockton urged "the whole country to rally" beneath the "glorious folds" of "stripes and stars."[56]

In appealing to history, Chauncey Cleveland of Connecticut reminded delegates that compromise had once settled the question "fairly."[57] Northern radicals testified that they would die for the Union and the Constitution. Moderates both North and South were willing to compromise for the same ends; but each thought of a vastly different document. The Constitution "made for us by WASHINGTON, FRANKLIN, MADISON, and HAMILTON," said Field, speaking grandiloquently for the northern radicals ". . . is good enough for us."[58] Southerners wanted additional assurances. "We are in earnest in our determination to have our rights under the Constitution defined and guaranteed," said J. Dixon Roman of Maryland. "Our safety, as well as our self-respect, requires this."[59]

Since many members had once served together in Congress, there were personal friendships as well as constitutional abstractions to appeal to. Summers pleaded with his former associates for "reasonable concessions." "I see a gentleman with whom, for a long time, I was upon terms of peculiar intimacy," he said. ". . . I appeal to him by every consideration which can move a friend, which can influence a patriot, which can govern the action of a statesman."[60] Thomas Ruffin of North Carolina urged members to be "brethren,"[61] and Stockton called upon Republicans by name, urging them to give up the Chicago platform "to save your country."[62]

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[53] *Debates*, pp. 99–102.

[54] The reporter rather than the speaker is no doubt responsible for the grammar; *Debates*, p. 180.

[55] *Debates*, pp. 189, 276.

[56] *Debates*, p. 119.

[57] *Debates*, p. 106.

[58] *Debates*, p. 171.

[59] *Debates*, p. 386.

Speakers indulged in unabashed flattery. Chase complimented Seddon's ability, sincerity, and frankness; Goodrich praised southern oratory and Morehead, northern fairness; Godlove Orth of Indiana lauded Virginia's heritage and A. W. Loomis, her justice. Caleb B. Smith appealed to "the venerable and able men around me, who bear historic names."[63] "I have listened to appeals stronger and more eloquent than I ever expect to hear again," Amos Tuck of New Hampshire admitted. "The representatives from the South . . . are skilful in debate and eloquent in speech." "Were there no [other] . . . view of the case," he added anticlimactically, "I might become a convert myself."[64]

In conference deliberations, southern extremists attempted to avoid the appearance of presenting an ultimatum or threat of secession, but newspaper accounts suggest that Tyler and Seddon urged such a course in southern caucuses and in private conversations. Seddon, who had advocated the right of secession during the crisis of 1850, was particularly outspoken.[65] Southern moderates made it clear, however, that they vigorously opposed dissolution of the Union. "I *hate* that word secession, because it is a cheat!" said Guthrie. "Call things by their right names! The Southern States have . . . originated a *revolution*." Rives and Reverdy Johnson likewise condemned it, but reminded listeners that "the great fact is still before us."[66] "Retain the Border States and the seceding States must come back," Frelinghuysen declared optimistically. "If the Border States go, I believe war is inevitable."[67]

Realists reminded delegates of the economic interdependence of the two sections. "We are like two lobes in the same skull," said Tuck, "one cannot outlive the other."[68] Dodge predicted "certain and inevitable ruin" unless delegates arrived at an adjustment. Granger pleaded for "some plan" that would "save the Government," emphasizing the futility of arguing about causes. "Paralysis has seized the whole country. . . ." said the former leader of the Silver Gray Whigs; "The effect is upon us."[69] Guthrie urged Northerners to consider the southern economy. "Suppose some event should . . . strike down the value of your property . . ." he asked. "Would you not wish to have it restored?" "If disruption—if war must come, one-half your merchants, one-half your mechanics will become bankrupt. Not one man, North or South, but must suffer. . . ."[70]

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[60] *Debates*, pp. 152, 154.

[61] *Debates*, p. 126.

[62] *Debates*, p. 119.

[63] *Debates*, pp. 213–214.

[64] *Debates*, p. 175.

[65] *The New York Times*, Feb. 18, 19, 20, 21; Detroit *Free Press*, Feb. 22, 1861; James A. Seddon to William Wallace, Aug. 23, 1850 (William P. Palmer Collection, Western Reserve Historical Society).

[66] *Debates*, pp. 68, 88, 136.

[67] *Debates*, p. 187.

[68] *Debates*, p. 179.

When appeals to patriotism, history, public opinion, friendship, flattery, and economic advantage failed to produce agreement, extremists and moderates alike impatiently called up the threat of war. Field, who had already applied to Lincoln for a military commission, foresaw omens of conflict, proclaiming, "Only last night I dreamed of marching armies and news from the seat of war." Despite his ominously serious intention, delegates laughed; but he nevertheless continued, "We must have either the arbitrament of reason or the arbitrament of the sword."[71] Accurately anticipating the sentiments of Lincoln's inaugural, Chase asked: "[If] . . . the President does his duty and undertakes to enforce the laws, and secession or revolution resists, what then? War! Civil war!"[72] Logan melodramatically described "harvests trampled down," "towns and villages . . . reduced to . . . smoking ruins," "widowed wives," and "orphaned children." "It is a picture that we are doomed to witness," he predicted, "unless we place a restraint upon our passions, forget selfish interests, and do something to save our country."[73]

Each side took pains to place the onus of war on the other. "If civil war is brought upon the country," Amaziah B. James of New York said to southern extremists, "it will be your work, not ours."[74] Stockton listed the inducements "with which the Republican leaders would seduce the North into fratricidal war": "The expenditure of uncounted millions, the distribution of epaulets and military commissions for an army of half a million of men, the immense patronage involved in the letting of army contracts, the inflation of prices and the rise of property which would follow the excessive issue of paper money, made necessary by the lavish expenditure;—these, indeed, are the enormous bribes which the Republican party offers."[75] Southerners, even southern moderates, looked upon federal coercion as war. Comparing it to the John Brown raid, J. M. Morehead warned: "If the new President proposes to come down to the South and conquer us, he will find that the whole temple shall fall."[76] Seddon likewise insisted that "Virginia

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[69] *Debates,* pp. 124, 192.

[70] *Debates,* p. 104.

[71] *Debates,* p. 170; David Dudley Field to Abraham Lincoln, Jan. 1, 1861 (Robert T. Lincoln Collection).

[72] *Debates,* p. 433.

[73] *Debates,* p. 256.

[74] *Debates,* p. 303.

[75] *Debates,* pp. 116–117.

[76] *Debates,* pp. 306–307.

will not permit coercion"—a position which Lot M. Morrill of Maine interpreted as "an attitude of menace." "It gives aid and comfort," he said, "to those who trample upon the laws and defy the authority of this Government."[77]

At this point, Stockton shouted "Silence, sir!" and "rushed toward Senator Morrill with violent and angry gesticulations." "We will not permit our Southern friends to be charged with bad faith . . . ! No black Republican shall—" Twenty or thirty Republican stalwarts then reportedly surrounded Morrill "like a living wall." Southerners similarly rallied around Stockton, and a disgraceful brawl was prevented only by the "prompt intervention of President Tyler." "Order," Tyler shouted. "Shame upon the delegate who would dishonor this Conference with violence."[78]

Since their soil was the obvious battleground, representatives of the Border States had greatest reason to speak the language of compromise. Ruffin called attention to fourteen hundred miles of "what is virtually a frontier" along the southern Tennessee and North Carolina borders.[79] Rives told of the unhappy geographical circumstance which placed them "between two embattled regions, between two angry, excited, and hostile portions of the Union."[80] "We wish to stay the hands of the extremists on both sides," said John W. Crisfield of Maryland. "We wish to stand by the Union."[81] Though a Republican, Frelinghuysen was willing to " 'back down' to save the country." "Two gentlemen cannot live in a parlor together a single day without reciprocal compromises," he observed metaphorically. "Our Government itself was a compromise. . . ."[82] Ewing advised delegates to be "firm as a rock in battle, but conciliatory in council."[83] "When the country is in danger," boasted Rodman M. Price of New Jersey, "my political robes hang loosely on my shoulders."[84]

When it became apparent that extremists would not, as they put it, "sacrifice their principles," the compromisers talked despairingly of the failure of speechmaking. "All the speeches that have been made, and all the declamation that has been uttered on this floor," Thomas White of Pennsylvania concluded, "have not made a single convert."[85] After fifteen days of deliberation, Franklin T. Backus of Ohio observed that "discussion, so far, has tended very little toward harmony or unanimity."[86] Cleveland called for a stop to "long speeches and picking flaws in each other." "If we stay here and

[77] *Debates,* pp. 146–148.
[78] *Debates,* p. 149; Chittenden, *Lincoln,* p. 55.
[79] *Debates,* p. 127.
[80] *Debates,* p. 135.
[81] *Debates,* p. 295.
[82] *Debates,* p. 188.
[83] *Debates,* p. 314.
[84] *Debates,* p. 400.
[85] *Debates,* p. 172.
[86] *Debates,* p. 272.

make speeches until doomsday, we shall be no better off," he asserted. "I am for action, and coming to an immediate decision."[87] Price concurred. "Do not let us sit here," he said, "like the great Belshazzar till the handwriting appears on the wall."[88] "Give us your votes," pleaded Wickliffe as the conference drew to a close. "We have had enough of discussion, which amounts to nothing."[89]

When the vote on the majority report, as amended, began on February 26, the crucial decision was on *Section 1* which restored the Missouri Compromise line. Radical Republicans opposed this provision as a repudiation of the Chicago platform, while the more extreme Southerners opposed it because of an amendment by Thomas E. Franklin of Pennsylvania limiting its application to *present* territory. In a vote taken "in the midst of much partially suppressed excitement," extremists on both sides joined to defeat it by a vote of eleven to eight. After a period of confusion, Thomas J. Turner, a pivotal member of the divided Illinois delegation, moved for a reconsideration. Francis Granger sternly rebuked "those gentlemen from the slave states especially, who have by their votes defeated the compromise we have labored so long and so earnestly to secure." Then Granger moved for an adjournment to give recalcitrants "a little time for consideration."[90]

When the vote was reconsidered on February 27, the Illinois delegation changed its vote from *no* to *yes*, and the negative votes of Missouri and New York were not cast, thus leaving a majority of nine to eight in favor of the basic feature of the resolutions committee report. Rumor had it that Lincoln had intervened in behalf of a negotiated adjustment, but this was not the case. As Turner explained in a letter to the president-elect: "Judge Palmer and myself of our own volition . . . agreed to co-opperate [*sic*] with Judge Logan in moving the reconsideration."[91] The delegation from New York was deadlocked because of the absence of David Dudley Field who was trying a case before the Supreme Court, and the delegation from Missouri declined to cast the deciding vote. Therefore, as the radical New York *Tribune* took pains to point out, the essential provision of the report "only got through the Convention by accident."[92]

After this uncertain victory, procompromise delegates found less difficulty with the remaining provisions, all of which passed without the excitement occasioned by *Section 1*.[93] Rhode Island and New Jersey consistently voted with the conciliatory delegations from Kentucky, Tennessee, Maryland, and Delaware. Ohio, Pennsylvania, and Illinois sometimes joined them, much to the disgust of their minority members. "The great mistake," wailed Goodrich, "is in Gov. [Andrew G.] Curtin and Gov. [William] Dennison sending so many conservatives."[94]

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[87] *Debates*, pp. 214–215.

[88] *Debates*, pp. 400–401.

[89] *Debates*, p. 312.

[90] As in the Constitutional Convention, voting was by states (*Debates*, pp. 437–438).

[91] *Debates*, 440–441; Thomas Turner to Abraham Lincoln, Feb. 28, 1861 (Robert T. Lincoln Collection).

[92] New York *Semi-Weekly Tribune*, Mar. 1 and 5, 1861.

[93] For a discussion of the voting, see Gunderson, *Old Gentlemen's Convention*, pp. 87–91.

General-in-Chief Winfield Scott ordered a cannonade of one hundred guns to celebrate the termination of the conference, and moderates everywhere looked hopefully toward a peaceful adjustment. "Let the people speak . . ." declared the New York *News*. "Here is a means not only of honorably avoiding the horrors of war, but of perpetuating the Union."[95] But even Scott's cannonading failed to arouse Congress. Extremists in the House refused to suspend the rules to entertain the report of the Conference, submitted as a proposed Amendment Thirteen to the Constitution. In the Senate, radical Republicans and southern fire-eaters combined to defeat it, even though Senator Crittenden supported it as a substitute for his compromise.[96]

The Peace Conference presented a compromise which no doubt would have received the endorsement of a majority in the states then remaining in the Union. But a fragmented and unorganized majority lacked control of Congress and the means of effectively initiating an adjustment. By a policy of "masterly inactivity," radical Republicans had delayed the report until the week of Lincoln's inauguration, when, as Horace Greeley observed, they were "in a position to *use* daggers as well as speak them."[97] Secessionists likewise opposed all compromise. "They must, somehow get a fight, or keep up the idea that one is coming," said the editor of the Louisville *Democrat*. "No compromise will do. . . . They are for 'irrepressible conflict.' "[98] Thomas Ewing concluded regretfully, "There can be no truce or compromise till the opposites have met in force and measured strength. . . ."[99]

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[94] J. Z. Goodrich to John Andrew, Feb. 12, 1861 (Andrew MSS.).

[95] N.d., in Washington *National Intelligencer*, Mar. 5, 1861.

[96] *Debates*, pp. 506, 570–571, 575–576, 580.

[97] Horace Greeley to W. H. Herndon, Dec. 26, 1860 (Robert T. Lincoln Collection).

[98] Mar. 3, 1861.

[99] Thomas Ewing to John J. Crittenden, June 25, 1861 (*The Life of John J. Crittenden* [Philadelphia, 1871], II, 323).

Lincoln's First Inaugural Address

MARIE HOCHMUTH NICHOLS

23

"*The great* event to which so many have been looking forward with anxiety—which has excited the hopes and fears of the country to an extent unparalleled in its comparatively brief history—will take place today," solemnly announced the newspapers on March 4, 1861. "Whether the ceremonies will be marred by any untoward event is, of course, a matter of conjecture, though grave fears are expressed on the subject."[1] Abraham Lincoln, the "gaunt Orator of the West" was, on this day, to take the helm of the nation.

In physical aspect, spring of 1861 in Washington was little different from other springs. March fourth dawned as other March fourths, no doubt, wavering between clearness and cloudiness. At daylight clouds hung dark and heavy in the sky. Early in the morning a few drops of rain fell, but scarcely enough to lay the dust. A northwest wind swept down the cross streets to unpaved Pennsylvania Avenue. The weather was cool and bracing and, on the whole, "favorable to the ceremonies of the day."[2] By noon the sun had come out.

But if, on the whole, spring had come as usual, there was little else that bespoke the same rhythm. Out of the deep of winter had come the somewhat bewildered voice of President Buchanan asking, "Why is it . . . that discontent now so extensively prevails, and the union of the States, which is the source of all these blessings is threatened with destruction?" Spiritually and morally the city, indeed the nation, was out of tune, cacophonous, discordant.

Trouble had not come suddenly to the nation, of course. Only a year previously the country had been "eminently prosperous in all its material interests."[3] Harvests had been abundant, and plenty smiled throughout the land. But for forty years there had been an undercurrent of restlessness. As early as 1820, an occasional voice urged the necessity for secession. Again in 1850, with somewhat greater vehemence voices were raised as the distribution of newly acquired Mexican territory took place. Then came the repeal of the Missouri Compromise in 1854, the civil war in Kansas and the Sumner-Brooks combat in the Senate in 1856, the Dred Scott decision in 1857, and the spectacular John Brown's raid at Harper's Ferry in 1859, all giving rise to disorder and unrest. Finally the election of 1860 took place, and the North appeared to some Southerners to have "capped the mighty pyramid of unfraternal enormities by electing Abraham Lincoln to the Chief Magistracy on a platform and by a system which indicates nothing but the subjugation of the South and the complete ruin of her social, political, and industrial institutions." It was not merely that Lincoln had been elected president, observed the New Orleans *Daily Crescent*, but the "majorities" by which he was elected were "more significant and suggestive than anything else—more so than the election itself—for they unmistakably indicate the hatred to the South which animates and controls the masses of the numerically strongest section of the Confederacy."[4] Lincoln, of course, was not animated by hatred for the South, and it is surely doubtful that a majority of his party was; nevertheless, the editors of the *Crescent* feared the institutions of the South were in more serious danger than ever. Senator Clingman of North Carolina found the election a "great, remarkable and dangerous fact that has filled my section with alarm and dread for the future," since Lincoln was elected "*because he was known to be a dangerous man*," avowing the principle of the "irrepressible conflict."[5] Richmond observers commented that a party "founded on the single sentiment, the exclusive feeling of hatred of African slavery," was "now the controlling power of this Confederacy," and noted that the question of "what is to be done . . . presses on every man."[6] In Charleston, South Carolina, the news of Lincoln's election was met with great rejoicing and "long continued cheering for a Southern Confederacy"[7] as the stars and stripes were hauled down and palmetto flags hoisted. Slanted, partisan, erroneous views about Lincoln issued regularly from the presses and threw the lower South into general turmoil.

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[1] *The New York Times*, Mar. 4, 1861.

[2] *The New York Times*, Mar. 5, 1861.

[3] Annual Message, Dec. 3, 1860, in *The Works of James Buchanan*, John Bassett Moore, ed. (Philadelphia, 1910), XI, 7.

Scarcely more than a month had passed when South Carolina led the secession movement. Her two senators resigned their seats in the United States Senate on November 10, and on December 20 an ordinance of secession was adopted,[8] bringing in its wake demonstrations throughout the South. "No *real* cause exists for this disunion movement, and no one knows that fact better than South Carolina," observed the Nashville *Republican Banner*

[4] Nov. 13, 1860, in Dwight L. Dumond, ed., *Southern Editorials on Secession* (New York, 1931), p. 237.

[5] Senate Speech, Dec. 3, 1860 (*Cong. Globe*, 36th Cong., 2nd Sess., p. 3).

[6] Richmond *Semi-Weekly Examiner*, Nov. 8, 1860.

[7] Wilmington *Daily Herald*, Nov. 9, 1860, in Dumond, p. 226.

[8] Daniel W. Howe, *Political History of Secession* (New York, 1914), p. 449.

accusingly. "She relies upon the political excitement produced by the recent elections to 'drag' the whole South into revolution."[9] Revolutions are made by determined minorities, Robert Barnwell Rhett had written a few months earlier, as he outlined a program for the disunionists.[10] The time had come for the labors of Rhett, Yancey, Ruffin, and other southern extremists to bear fruit. By the first of February of the new year, Mississippi, Florida, Alabama, Louisiana, Texas, and Georgia had repealed, rescinded, and abrogated their membership in the Union by adopting secession ordinances, standing "prepared to resist by force any attempt to maintain the supremacy of the Constitution of the United States." The other slaveholding states held a position of *quasi*-neutrality, declaring that their adhesion to the Union could be secured only by affording guarantees against wrongs of which they complained, and dangers which they apprehended.[11] Already by the end of 1860, secessionists at Charleston were in possession of the post office, the federal courts, the custom houses, and forts Castle Pinckney and Moultrie.[12]

With clamor and fanfare senators took their leave from familiar places. When on December 31, Senator Judah P. Benjamin of Louisiana reported that he would make a parting secession speech, "every corner was crowded"[13] in the Senate galleries. His closing declaration that "you can never subjugate us; you never can convert the free sons of the soil into vassals. . . . never, never can degrade them to the level of an inferior and servile race. Never! Never!"[14] was greeted by the galleries with "disgraceful applause, screams and uproar." As the galleries were cleared because of misbehavior, people murmured in departing, "Now we will have war," "D–n the Abolitionists," "Abe Lincoln will never come here."[15] Critics observing the national scene remarked, "The President . . . enters upon one of the most momentous and difficult duties ever devolved upon any man, in this country or any other. No one of his predecessors was ever called upon to confront dangers half as great, or to render a public service half as difficult, as those which will challenge his attention at the very outset of his Administration."[16]

January of 1861 came without hope, and with little possibility of the cessation of unrest. Occasionally the newspapers scoffed at the recommendation of the *Richmond Inquirer* that an armed force proceeding from Virginia or Maryland should invade the District of Columbia and prevent the peaceful inauguration of Abraham Lincoln, dismissing it as the "exaggeration of political rhetoric."[17] The capital of the nation was beset by rumor, clamor, occasional attempts at compromise, and general misbehavior. "I passed a part of last week in Washington," observed a Baltimore reporter, "and never, since the days of Jerico [*sic*], has there been such a blowing of rams' horns as may now be heard in that distracted city. If sound and clamor could overthrow the Constitution, one might well expect to see it go down before the windy suspirations of forced breath that shock and vibrate on all sides." Almost everywhere he met "intemperate and alarming disciples of discord and confusion." "War, secession, and disunion are on every lip; and no hope of compromise or adjustment is held out by anyone. The prevailing sentiment in Washington is with the South."[18]

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[9] Nov. 13, 1860.

[10] See Allan Nevins, *The Emergence of Lincoln* (New York, 1950), II, 223, 224.

[11] *The New York Times*, Feb. 11, 1861.

[12] J. G. Randall, *Lincoln the President* (New York, 1945), I, 215.

[13] *The New York Times*, Jan. 1, 1861.

[14] *Cong. Globe*, 36th Cong., 2nd Sess., p. 217.

[15] *The New York Times*, Jan. 1, 1861.

[16] *The New York Times*, Feb. 11, 1861.

[17] Washington *National Intelligencer*, Jan. 3, 1861.

As secession went on apace in the South, Wendell Phillips declared in Boston's Music Hall that he hoped that all the slave states would leave the Union.[19] Horace Greeley, impatient after forty years of southern threat, disclaimed a "union of force,–a union held together by bayonets," and would interpose "no obstacle to their peaceful withdrawal."[20] Meanwhile, however, a few held out for compromise. On December 18 Senator Crittenden of Kentucky introduced a series of compromises in the Senate,[21] but action seemed unlikely. When, on January 7, Senator Toombs of Georgia made a "noisy and ranting secession speech, and at the close was greeted with a storm of hisses and applause, which was continued some time," Crittenden's "appeal to save the country," presented in "good taste," created "little or no additional favor for his compromise measure."[22] While Crittenden appealed in the Senate, a peace conference met in Washington at the invitation of Virginia. Although delegates assembled and conducted business, submitting to the Senate a series of resolutions, it appeared from the beginning that little would be gained. It was clear that the sympathies of the upper southern states, which had not yet seceded, were with those that had.[23] Ultimately the propositions were rejected, just as were the Crittenden resolutions in the closing hours of Congress. In all, it appeared to be an era of "much talk and small performance," a dreary season of debate, with "clouds of dusty and sheety showers of watery rhetoric," a nation trying to live by "prattle alone," a "miserably betalked nation."[24]

When Lincoln left Springfield on February 11, to wend his way toward Washington, another president, Jefferson Davis, elected on February 9 to head the newly organized southern Confederacy, was traveling from Mississippi to the Montgomery Convention of slaveholding states to help complete the act of secession, his trip "one continuous ovation." "The time for compromises is past," observed Davis, as he paused at the depot at Montgomery to address the crowd, "and we are now determined to maintain our position, and make all who oppose us smell Southern powder, feel Southern steel."[25]

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[18] *The New York Times,* Jan. 15, 1861.
[19] *The New York Times,* Jan. 21, 1861 (includes complete speech text).
[20] *Recollections of a Busy Life* (New York, 1868), p. 398.
[21] *Cong. Globe,* 36th Cong., 2nd Sess., pp. 112–114.
[22] *The New York Times,* Jan. 8, 1861.
[23] Howe, pp. 465–467.
[24] New York *Daily Tribune,* Mar. 13, 1861.

Clearly, people could agree that Lincoln was to inherit "a thorny wilderness of perplexities."[26] Would he "coerce" the seceded states and ask for the restoration of federal properties in possession of the secessionists? Would he respond to pressure "from all sides" and from a "fraction of his own party" to consent to "extension" of slavery, particularly below the lines of 36° and 30′? Would he listen to "compromise" Republicans in Congress and only "*seem*" to compromise, "so as not to appear obstinate or insensible to the complaints of the Slaveholders?"[27] Would he stand by the Chicago Republican platform, severe in its strictures on the incumbent Democratic administration's acceptance of the principle that the personal relation between master and slave involved "an unqualified property in persons"? Would he stand by the part of the platform which pledged "the maintenance inviolate of the rights of the states, and especially the right of each State to order and control its own domestic institutions according to its own judgment exclusively"?[28] Was the belief that he had so often uttered—"A house divided against itself cannot stand"[29]—representative of the true Lincoln? These were the many questions in the minds of the people as Lincoln traveled east, stopping to address crowds that welcomed him in cities and towns along the way. He had been largely a silent observer since his election. Occasionally he expressed his views in letters to friends, but he had made no public pronouncements during the secession crisis. He had not been silent because of any "indifference to the anxiety that pervades the minds of men," but because he thought "silence" to be "peculiarly proper" until "I should see it all, up to the last minute. . . ."[30] The brief talks along the way, designed to provide occasion for him to see and to be seen were, in the main, expressions of faith in the united will of the people to help preserve the Union.[31]

Already at his first stop in Indianapolis, he was to discover that there was virtue in a policy of silence until the time came when he could express himself fully and "officially."[32] Clues in regard to his policy were awaited, grasped eagerly when they were dropped, and just as often as not misinterpreted. At Indianapolis a brief attempt to differentiate between "coercion" and "invasion" was quickly interpreted as a declaration of war.[33] At Columbus and Pittsburgh his remarks "there is no crisis, excepting such a one as may be gotten up at any time by turbulent men aided by designing politicians"[34] and "there is nothing going on . . . nothing that really hurts anybody" were seized upon as symptoms of his inability to calculate the seriousness of the crisis. In general, he refrained from exposition of his views and, "in the varying and repeatedly shifting scenes of the present," left the burden of fully expressing his policy until he had a "view of the whole field."[35]

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[25] New York *Daily Tribune*, Feb. 18, 1861.

[26] New York *Daily Tribune*, Mar. 4, 1861.

[27] New York *Daily Tribune*, Feb. 18, 1861.

[28] Murat Halstead, *A History of the National Political Conventions of the Current Presidential Campaign* (Columbus, 1860), p. 138.

[29] Speech at Springfield, Ill., June 16, 1858, in *Abraham Lincoln: His Speeches and Writings*, Roy P. Basler, ed. (Cleveland, 1946), p. 372.

[30] Address at New York, Feb. 19, 1861, in *Complete Works of Abraham Lincoln*, rev. ed., John G. Nicolay and John Hay, eds. (New York, 1905), VI, 146, 147.

[31] According to Kenneth Stampp, "During his trip to Washington the central theme of Lincoln's public addresses was the further development and clarification of the strategy of defense. . . . Shrewd realist that he was, he recognized that hostilities might ensue, and he seemed preoccupied with an intense desire to leave the record clear, to make it evident to his listeners that conflict could be initiated only by the South." See *And the War Came: The North and the Secession Crisis, 1860–1861* (Baton Rouge, 1951), pp. 191, 192. The evidence for such an imputation of motives seems meager in comparison with the evidence for an imputation of higher motives—an earnest desire to lead the nation peacefully out of the crisis and preserve the Union. On Lincoln's motivations in the pre-Sumter period, see J. G. Randall, *Constitutional Problems Under Lincoln*, rev. ed. (Urbana, Ill., 1951), p. xv; also *idem*, "Lincoln and the Governance of Men," *Abraham Lincoln Quart.*, VI (1951), 327–352.

As the newspapers gave advance notice of what was to transpire on inauguration day, there was a note of fear and uncertainty in regard to the safety of the president-elect, along with a general eagerness about the outlines of Lincoln's course of action to be announced in the inaugural address. While visitors to Washington were seeking to get a glimpse of the tumultuous Senate in all-night session, General Scott and his advisers were together planning to take the "greatest precaution" for preventing "any attack upon the procession or demonstration against Mr. Lincoln's person." Rumors of the presence of a "large gang of 'Plug Uglies' who are here from Baltimore," circulated freely. Whether they were in Washington to make an attack on the person of the president or to "create a disturbance, and plunder private persons" was a matter of general speculation. Whatever the purpose, General Scott and his advisers had decided to leave nothing undone to secure the safety of the president-elect. Riflemen in squads were to be placed in hiding on the roofs commanding buildings along Pennsylvania Avenue. Orders were given to fire in the event of a threat to the presidential carriages. There were cavalry regulars to guard the side-street crossings; they moved from one street to another as the procession passed. From the windows of the Capitol wings riflemen were to watch the inauguration platform. General Scott would oversee the ceremonies from the top of a slope commanding the north entrance to the Capitol, ready to take personal charge of a battery of flying artillery stationed there. District militia in three ranks were to surround the platform to keep back the crowd. Armed detectives in citizens' clothing were to be scattered through the great audience.[36] "General Scott had determined the ceremony should take place under every circumstance of humiliation for the South," the Richmond *Examiner* observed scornfully. "The city was filled with Federal bayonets, companies of flying artillery, &," thus giving the "idea of a conquered section. . . ."[37]

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[32] Address at New York, Feb. 19, 1861, in Nicolay and Hay, eds., VI, 147.

[33] Address to the Legislature of Indiana, Feb. 12, 1861, in Nicolay and Hay, eds., VI, 112–115; see also Stampp, p. 191.

[34] Address at Pittsburgh, Feb. 15, 1861, in Nicolay and Hay, eds., VI, 125.

[35] Address to the Legislature of Ohio, Feb. 13, 1861, in Nicolay and Hay, eds., VI, 122.

[36] *The New York Times*, Mar. 4, 1861; see also Carl Sandburg, *Abraham Lincoln, The War Years* (New York, 1939), I, 121; Randall, *Lincoln the President*, I, 293, 294; William E. Baringer, *A House Dividing* (Springfield, Ill., 1945), pp. 331–334; *The Diary of*

The occasion must have seemed strange to the man who had been accustomed to being carried on the shoulders of admirers on speaking occasions in his years as a stump orator in the West, and to being the idol of many a torchlight procession during the combats with the "Little Giant" in the tumultuous debates of 1858. Even the Capitol grounds, where the crowds had begun to assemble, had a strangely unfamiliar look in contrast to its fixity during his years as congressman in 1847 and 1848. "The old dome familiar to Congressman Lincoln in 1848 had been knocked loose and hauled down," noted Sandburg.[38] There was iron-wrought material on the Capitol grounds. Hammers, jacks, scaffolds, and derricks proclaimed that the Capitol building was being reconstructed, extended, and embellished. The carpenters had set up a temporary platform fronting the Senate wing for the occasion, with a small wooden canopy covering the speaker's table.[39] The crowd swarmed about all the approaches leading to the Capitol grounds, observed a witness, while the spacious level extending from the east front of the Capitol was "one vast sea of heads."[40] There were between 25,000 and 50,000 people there, waiting with expectancy.[41] "Every window in the north front of the Capitol was filled with ladies. Every treetop bore its burden of eager eyes. Every fence and staging and pile of building material for the Capitol extension was made a 'coyn of vantage' for its full complement of spectators."[42] Observers noted that "scarce a Southern face is to be seen"[43] in the crowd, "judging from the lack of long-haired men."[44] While the crowd waited for the administration of the oath to the vice-president, which took place in the Senate chambers, it was entertained with martial music, and "by the antics of a lunatic, who climbed a tall tree in front of the capitol and made a long political speech, claiming to be the rightful President of the United States." Policemen were detached to bring him down, but he merely climbed higher and "stood rocking in the wind, and made another speech."[45] The indoor ceremonies being over, the major figures of the occasion were seen emerging, Abraham Lincoln walking with James Buchanan by his side.

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a Public Man (Chicago, 1945), pp. 73, 74; Clark E. Carr, *Stephen A. Douglas, His Life and Public Services, Speeches and Patriotism* (Chicago, 1909), p. 123.

[37] Mar. 6, 1861.

[38] Sandburg, I, 120.

[39] Baringer, p. 333.

[40] Cincinnati *Commercial*, in Chicago *Daily Tribune*, Mar. 8, 1861.

[41] New York *Daily Tribune*, Mar. 5, 1861.

[42] Chicago *Daily Tribune*, Mar. 9, 1861.

[43] *The New York Times*, Mar. 4, 1861.

[44] Nashville *Republican Banner*, Mar. 7, 1861; see also Chicago *Daily Tribune*, Mar. 5, 1861.

[45] Cincinnati *Commercial*, in Chicago *Daily Tribune*, Mar. 8, 1861.

As Lincoln and Buchanan took places on the right side of the speaker's stand, Chief Justice Taney, who soon would administer the oath of office, took a seat upon the left. Many in the audience were seeing Lincoln for the first time. "Honest Abe Lincoln," the folks back home called him, or just "Old Abe" was the affectionate cry at the Chicago Wigwam as thousands cheered and shook the rafters "like the rush of a great wind, in the van of a storm,"[46] when he was nominated. Walt Whitman thought "four sorts of genius, four mighty and primal hands, will be needed to the complete limning of this man's future portrait—the eyes and brains and finger-touch of Plutarch and Eschylus [sic] and Michel [sic] Angelo, assisted by Rabelais."[47] "If any personal description of me is thought desirable," Lincoln had written earlier, "it may be said I am, in height, six feet four inches, nearly; lean in flesh, weighing on an average one hundred and eighty pounds; dark complexion, with coarse black hair and gray eyes. No other marks or brands recollected."[48] He was "not a pretty man," his law partner, Herndon, thought, "nor was he an ugly one: he was a homely man, careless of his looks, plain looking and plain acting." But he had that "inner quality which distinguishes one person from another."[49] "I never saw a more thoughtful face," observed David Locke, "I never saw a more dignified face, I never saw so sad a face."[50] Emerson had found in him the "grandeur and strength of absolute simplicity," when, on occasion, he had heard him speak, seen his small gray eyes kindle, heard his voice ring, and observed his face shine and seem to light up a whole assembly.[51] "Abraham Lincoln: one of nature's noblemen," he was sometimes toasted."[52]

"It was unfortunate," says the noted Lincoln scholar, J. G. Randall, "that Lincoln was not better known, North and South, in March of 1861. Had people more fully understood his pondering on government, reverence for law, peaceful intent and complete lack of sectional bitterness, much tragedy might have been avoided."[53] "Gentle, and merciful and just!" William Cullen Bryant was eventually to write,[54] but now there was something unknown about Lincoln to many. It is true that after the Lincoln-Douglas debates he had gained recognition beyond the limits of his state. The Chicago *Democrat* called attention to the fact that "Mr. Lincoln's name has been used by newspapers and public meetings outside the State in connection with the Presidency and Vice Presidency, so that it is not only in his own State that Honest Old Abe is respected." "Even his opponents profess to love the man, though they hate his principles," it observed.[55] Again the *Illinois State Journal* took pride in reporting his growing fame. In "other states," it said, he had been found "not only . . . an unrivalled orator, strong in debate, keen in his logic and wit, with admirable powers of statement, and a fertility of resources which are equal to every occasion; but his truthfulness, his candor, his honesty of purpose, his magnanimity . . . have stamped him as a statesman whom the Republicans throughout the Union may be proud of."[56] In 1860, in New York, the "announcement that Hon. Abraham Lincoln, of Illinois, would deliver an address in Cooper Institute . . . drew thither a large and enthusiastic assemblage," and William Cullen Bryant thought that he had only "to pronounce the name of Abraham Lincoln" who had previously been known "only by fame" in order to secure the "profoundest attention."[57] Lincoln had faced thousands of people along the way to Washington—at Indianapolis, Cleveland, Philadelphia, Albany, Harrisburg, and elsewhere—and was greeted enthusiastically. Still, "in general," observes Randall, "it cannot be said that he had a 'good press' at the threshold of office. Showmanship failed to make capital of his rugged origin, and there faced the country a strange man from Illinois who was dubbed a 'Simple Susan,' a 'baboon,' or a 'gorilla.' "[58] "Our Presidential Merryman," *Harper's Weekly* had labeled him, later carrying a caricature recounting the fabricated story of his incognito entry into Washington. "He wore a Scotch plaid Cap and a very long Military Cloak, so that he was entirely unrecognizable,"[59] the caption read. Men like Stanton thought of him as a "low, cunning clown."[60] And the Associated Press reporter, Henry Villard, remembered his "fondness for low talk," and could not have persuaded himself "that the man might possibly possess true greatness of mind and nobility of heart," admitting to a feeling of "disgust and humiliation that such a person should have been called upon to direct the destinies of a great nation."[61]

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[46] Halstead, pp. 149–151.

[47] *The Complete Writings of Walt Whitman* (New York, 1902), V, 244.

[48] Lincoln to J. W. Fell, Dec. 20, 1859, Nicolay and Hay, eds., V, 288, 289.

[49] Herndon MS. fragment, in Randall, *Lincoln the President*, I, 28.

[50] *Remembrances of Abraham Lincoln by Distinguished Men of His Time*, 8th ed., Allen Thorndike Rice, ed. (New York, 1889), p. 442.

[51] John Wesley Hill, *Abraham Lincoln, Man of God*, 4th ed. (New York, 1920), p. 305.

[52] Carl Sandburg, *Abraham Lincoln, The Prairie Years* (New York, 1926), I, 199, 200.

[53] *The New York Times Mag.*, Feb. 6, 1949, p. 11.

[54] "Abraham Lincoln," *The Poetical Works of William Cullen Bryant*, Parke Godwin, ed. (New York, 1883), II, 151.

In the South, there had been little willingness to know the Lincoln they "should have known," the Lincoln who "intended to be fair to the Southern People. . . ."[62] The South had made up its mind that whatever the North did to ingratiate Lincoln with them was done in deceit. "Since the election of Lincoln most of the leading Northern Abolition papers have essayed the herculean task of reconciling the Southern People to his Presidential rule," observed the New Orleans *Daily Crescent*. "Having succeeded to their heart's content in electing him—having vilified and maligned the South through a long canvass, without measure or excuse—they now tell us that Mr. Lincoln is a very good man, a very amiable man; that he is not at all violent in his prejudices or partialities; that, on the contrary, he is a moderate, kindly-tempered, conservative man, and if we will only submit to his administration for a time, we will ascertain that he will make one of the best Presidents the South or the country ever had: 'Will you walk into my parlor said the spider to the fly.' " "Mr. Lincoln may be all that these Abolition journals say he is. But, we do not believe a word they say," the *Crescent* continued. "We are clearly convinced that they are telling falsehoods to deceive the people of the South, in order to carry out their own selfish and unpatriotic purposes the more easily."[63]

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[55] Springfield *Daily Illinois State Journal,* Nov. 15, 1858.

[56] Springfield *Daily Illinois State Journal,* Nov. 12, 1860.

[57] *The New York Times*, Feb. 28, 1860.

[58] Randall, *Lincoln the President,* I, 292; see also *idem.*, "The Unpopular Mr. Lincoln," *Lincoln the Liberal Statesman* (New York, 1947), pp. 65–87.

[59] *Harper's Weekly*, Mar. 2, p. 144; Mar. 9, 1861, p. 160.

[60] *Diary of a Public Man*, pp. 48, 49.

[61] *Memoirs of Henry Villard* (Boston, 1904), I, 144.

[62] Randall, "Lincoln's Great Declarations of Faith," *The New York Times Mag.*, Feb. 6, 1949, p. 11.

The South found it easier to view Lincoln as a stereotype, a "radical Abolitionist," and "Illinois ape," a "traitor to his country." With Lincoln "comes something worse than slang, rowdyism, brutality, and all moral filth; something worse than all the tag and rag of Western grog-shops and Yankee factories, headed by Bob, Prince of Rails. . . . With all that comes arbitrary power. With all those comes the daring and reckless leader of Abolitionists." Here was a "creature whom nobody can hear with patience or look on without disgust," in truth, a very "baboon."[64] Then, too, the escape through Baltimore by night could "not fail to excite a most mischievous feeling of contempt for the personal character of Mr. Lincoln throughout the country, especially at the South." "The Wicked Fleeth When no man Pursueth," the Richmond *Dispatch* recommended as a fitting text from which the presidential chaplain should preach when Lincoln appeared at church.[65]

To the country at large as his inauguration approached, so appeared Lincoln, who "without mock modesty" had described himself en route to Washington as "the humblest of all individuals that have ever been elevated to the presidency."[66]

Lincoln had spent six weeks in preparing the speech he was about to deliver—six weeks and many years of lonely thought. Like the "House Divided Speech" and the "Cooper Union Address" it was deliberately and cautiously prepared, undergoing revision up to the moment of delivery.[67] "Late in January," he told his law partner, Herndon, he was "ready to begin" the preparation of the inaugural speech. In a room over a store, across the street from the state house, cut off from all intrusion and outside communication, he began the preparation. He had told Herndon what works he wanted to consult and asked to be furnished "Henry Clay's great speech delivered in 1850; Andrew Jackson's proclamation against Nullification; and a copy of the Constitution." He "afterwards" called for a copy of Webster's reply to Hayne, a speech which he regarded as "the grandest specimen of American oratory." "With these few 'volumes,' and no further sources of reference,"[68] he began his work on the address.

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[63] In Dumond, p. 229.

[64] Richmond *Daily Examiner*, Mar. 4, 1861.

[65] In Atlanta *Southern Confederacy*, Mar. 9, 1861.

[66] Address to the Legislature of New York, Feb. 18, 1861, in Nicolay and Hay, eds., VI, 140.

[67] See the Robert T. Lincoln Collection of the Papers of Abraham Lincoln, Library of Congress (microfilm copy, Univ. of Illinois Library). This collection contains the most important source for the various working sheets of the inaugural speech, with deletions, revisions, marginal jottings, pasted-in sections. Many of the changes are in Lincoln's own hand, together with suggestions by Seward and others.

On February 2, 1861, he wrote a friend, George D. Prentice,[69] editor of the *Louisville Journal*, "I have the document blocked out; but in the now rapidly shifting scenes I shall have to hold it subject to revision up to the time of delivery." He had an original draft printed by one of the proprietors of the *Illinois State Journal* to whom he entrusted the manuscript.[70] Before leaving Springfield, he permitted Carl Schurz to read it.[71] Upon reaching Indianapolis, he presented a copy to O. H. Browning, who had accompanied him from Springfield. According to Browning, "before parting with Mr. Lincoln at Indianapolis, Tuesday, he gave me a copy of his inaugural address, and requested me to read it, and give him my opinion, which I did. I thought it . . . able, well considered, and appropriate, and so informed him. It is, in my judgment, a very admirable document. He permitted me to retain a copy, under promise not to show it except to Mrs. Browning."[72]

Upon arriving in Washington, Lincoln submitted a copy to Senator Seward with the same invitation to criticize it.[73] Few others seem to have been taken into Lincoln's confidence.[74] Mr. Browning advised but one change, supposed by some authorities to be the most vital modification in the entire document.[75] Mr. Seward offered many suggestions for improving the document, mostly of a stylistic nature. Finally, Lincoln made various changes in the original draft.[76]

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[68] *Herndon's Life of Lincoln: The History and Personal Recollections of Abraham Lincoln as Originally Written by William H. Herndon and Jesse W. Weik*, Paul M. Angle, ed. (Cleveland, 1949), p. 386.

[69] *Lincoln Lore*, no. 308, Mar. 4, 1935.

[70] Louis A. Warren, "Original Draft of the First Inaugural," in *Lincoln Lore*, no. 358, Feb. 17, 1936.

[71] *Speeches, Correspondence and Political Papers of Carl Schurz*, Frederic Bancroft, ed. (New York, 1913) I, 179.

[72] Theodore Calvin Pease and James G. Randall, eds., *The Diary of Orville Hickman Browning* (Springfield, Ill., 1925), I, 455, 456.

[73] Frederick W. Seward, *Seward at Washington, as Senator and Secretary of State: A Memoir of His Life, with Selections from His Letters, 1846–1861* (New York, 1891), p. 512.

[74] See John G. Nicolay and John Hay, *Abraham Lincoln, A History* (New York, 1914), III, 319: "Judge David Davis read it while in Springfield," and "Francis P. Blair, Sr., read it in Washington, and highly commended it, suggesting no changes."

[75] On Browning's advice Lincoln omitted the portion of his original draft in which he declared his purpose to "reclaim the public property and places which have fallen" and limited his declared intention to that of holding, occupying and possessing the places which the government still held. See Pease and Randall, I, 455.

[76] In addition to the Robert T. Lincoln Collection of the Papers of Abraham Lincoln,

Mr. Lincoln had the crowd "matched" in sartorial perfection as he faced his audience on March 4 for his inauguration. He was wearing a new tall hat, a new black suit of clothes and black boots, and displayed an expansive white shirt bosom. He carried an ebony cane with a gold head.[77] Everything in readiness, Senator Baker from Oregon advanced to the platform and announced, "Fellow-Citizens: I introduce to you Abraham Lincoln, the President elect of the United States of America." Lincoln arose, "walked deliberately and composedly to the table, and bent low in honor of the repeated and enthusiastic cheering of the countless host before him. Having put on his spectacles, he arranged his manuscript on the small table, keeping the paper thereon by the aid of his cane. . . ."[78] It was 1:30 P.M. when he saluted his audience: "Fellow-citizens of the United States: In compliance with a custom as old as the government itself, I appear before you to address you briefly, and to take, in your presence, the oath prescribed by the Constitution of the United States, to be taken by the President 'before he enters on the execution of his office.' "[79]

Considering the general predisposition of the South to view the incoming administration with suspicion, and believing that his inaugural must be "my certificate of moral character, written by myself,"[80] Lincoln sought this opportunity to "press upon the public attention the most conclusive evidence of which the case is susceptible," the idea of the integrity of the new administration. Wise judgment could scarcely have dictated otherwise, for the lower South had gone out of the Union partly on the grounds that it expected no fair consideration from the newly born party, and the upper South and Border States hung in the balance. Lincoln attempted first to conciliate his audience by assuring the country that "the property, peace and security of no section are to be in any wise endangered by the now incoming Administration." In order to do this he called attention to the fact that he was taking a solemn oath in "your presence"; he committed himself again to words previously spoken that have "all the while existed, and been open to their inspection"; to the Republican platform pertaining to the "maintenance inviolate of the rights of the States, and especially the right of each State to order and control its own domestic institutions according to its own judgment exclusively"; and to the clause "plainly written in the Constitution," pertaining to delivering up the escaping fugitive "on claim of the party to whom such service or labor may be due." He concluded his open-

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see *MS.* of early printed version with secretarial reproductions of the changes, and accompanying letter of John Hay to Charles Eliot Norton, Mar. 25, 1899, explaining the nature of the revisions (Widener Library, Harvard University); also see Nicolay and Hay, *Abraham Lincoln, A History*, III, 327–344; Louis A. Warren, "Original Draft of the First Inaugural," *Lincoln Lore*, no. 358, Feb. 17, 1936, and no. 359, Feb. 24, 1936; Ida M. Tarbell, *The Life of Abraham Lincoln* (New York, 1900), II, 6–14.

[77] Sandburg, *War Years*, I, 122.

[78] *The New York Times*, Mar. 5, 1861.

[79] The text of the inaugural is that in Basler, pp. 579–590.

[80] Ward Hill Lamon, *Recollections of Abraham Lincoln, 1847–1865*, Dorothy Lamon Teillard, ed. (Washington, 1911), p. 36.

ing remarks with a reiteration of the avowal that he took the "official oath to-day, with no mental reservations, and with no purpose to construe the Constitution or laws, by any hypercritical rules."

This was neither the material nor the method of a "deceitful" or "dangerous" man. By it, Lincoln was attempting to touch off those favorable responses that accrue to the appearance of honesty, straightforwardness, and obedience to the Constitution. His pledge of faith could not have given satisfaction to the abolitionist group within his own party with whom he was constantly identified by the South; it did, however, serve to differentiate him from the radical element and hence to reassure the upper South and Border States yet within the Union. From the standpoint of persuasiveness Lincoln was undoubtedly wise in taking the advice of Seward to omit the two paragraphs immediately following his opening statement in the original draft of the Inaugural:

> The more modern custom of electing a Chief Magistrate upon a previously declared platform of principles, supersedes, in a great measure, the necessity of restating those principles in an address of this sort. Upon the plainest grounds of good faith, one so elected is not at liberty to shift his position. It is necessarily implied, if not expressed, that, in his judgment the platform which he thus accepts, binds him to nothing either unconstitutional or inexpedient.
>
> Having been so elected upon the Chicago Platform, and while I would repeat nothing in it, of aspersion or epithet or question of motive against any man or party, I hold myself bound by duty, as well as impelled by inclination to follow, within the executive sphere, the principles therein declared. By no other course could I meet the reasonable expectations of the country.

To have used the paragraphs would undoubtedly have incited anew the suspicion that he was merely a "sectional" president and an "abolitionist" or "party man."

With "more of Euclid than of Demosthenes"[81] in him, his delivery was not that of the spellbinder, agitator, or demagogue. His voice was a tenor that "carried song-tunes poorly but had clear and appealing modulations."[82] Habitually a little "scared"[83] when he spoke, he was "pale and very nervous"[84] on this occasion, but his "cheerfulness was marked."[85] Compelled by nature to speak slowly,"[86] his manner was "deliberate and impressive," and his voice "remarkably clear and penetrating."[87] There was little evidence in his voice of the fear that might have come as the result of knowing that there were "heavy bets" about his safety.[88] Some of the spectators noted a

[81] Randall, *Lincoln the President*, I, 49.
[82] Sandburg, *Prairie Years*, I, 305.
[83] *Herndon's Life of Lincoln*, p. 220.
[84] *Diary of a Public Man*, p. 74.
[85] Cincinnati *Commercial*, in Chicago *Daily Tribune*, Mar. 8, 1861.
[86] *Herndon's Life of Lincoln*, p. 273.
[87] New York *Tribune*, Mar. 5, 1861.
[88] *The New York Times*, Mar. 4, 1861.

"loud, and distinct voice, quite intelligible by at least ten thousand persons below him";[89] others found it a "clear, ringing voice, that was easily heard by those on the outer limits of the crowd";[90] and still others noted his "firm tones of voice," his "great deliberation and precision of emphasis."[91] Sandburg might have remarked that it gave out "echoes and values."[92]

Having spent time in an attempt to gain a fair hearing for the rest of his address, Lincoln next took up the question for which the whole country awaited an answer: What is the duty and the policy of the new administration in regard to secession? Without delay, he laid down the proposition,

> I hold, that in contemplation of universal law, and of the Constitution, the Union of these States is perpetual. Perpetuity is implied, if not expressed, in the fundamental law of all national governments,

hence

> no State, upon its own mere motion, can lawfully get out of the Union,—that *resolves* and *ordinances* to that effect are legally void, and that acts of violence, within any State or States, against the authority of the United States, are insurrectionary or revolutionary, according to circumstances.

Furthermore

> if the United States be not a government proper, but an association of States in the nature of contract merely, can it, as a contract, be peaceably unmade, by less than all the parties who made it?

To the North, the mere assertion of the principle of perpetuity would have been sufficient; no further proof would have been necessary. But to the lower South, already out of the Union, and to the upper South, contemplating a similar action, clearly assertion was not sufficient. Therefore, Lincoln found his proposition "confirmed by the history of the Union itself." The Union, he pointed out, was "much older than the Constitution"; it was "formed in fact, by the Articles of Association in 1774": it was "matured and continued by the Declaration of Independence in 1776"; it was "further matured and the faith of all the then thirteen States expressly plighted and engaged that it should be perpetual, by the Articles of Confederation in 1778"; finally, "in 1787, one of the declared objects for ordaining and establishing the Constitution, was '*to form a more perfect Union.*'" Although Lincoln's support of his proposition was factual, the facts themselves carried with them the respect and loyalty that had always attached to the Founding Fathers, who were held in esteem for their vision and their wisdom.

Having stated the principle which guided him, Lincoln continued logically with its application, holding that "to the extent of my ability I shall take care, as the Constitution itself expressly enjoins upon me, that the laws of the Union be faithfully executed in all the States." In discussing the policy of the government in enforcing the laws of the Union, Lincoln did not speak as the master or the mere advocate handing down a bloodless decision, but as a servant performing a "simple duty," the American people being "my rightful masters." As a skilled persuader, he was undoubtedly aware that lines of argument will often meet with varied responses according to whether they are put forward by those toward whom one feels sympathetic or antagonistic. Nowhere in the inaugural did he more earnestly seek to be conciliating and mild. He was aware that legalism alone would not sustain his purpose. He could have used the bold and confident assertion which appeared in the original draft of the Inaugural: "All the power at my disposal will be used to reclaim the public property and places which have fallen; to hold, occupy and possess these, and all other property and places belonging to the government and to collect the duties on imposts; but beyond what may be necessary for these objects, there will be no invasion of any State."

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[89] Washington *National Intelligencer*, Mar. 5, 1861.

[90] *The New York Times*, Mar. 5, 1861.

[91] Cincinnati *Commercial*, in Chicago *Daily Tribune*, Mar. 8, 1861.

[92] Sandburg, *Prairie Years*, I, 306.

Even in the original draft, Lincoln had avoided the use of the names of specific forts to which he had reference. Pickens and Sumter were in a precarious position and were peculiarly explosive topics of discussion. However, Lincoln yielded even further in tempering his remarks, accepting the suggestion of O. H. Browning, and finally choosing only to say: "The power confided to me will be used to hold, occupy, and possess the property and places belonging to the government, and to collect the duties and imposts; but beyond what may be necessary for these objects, there will be no invasion—no using of force against or among the people anywhere."

Furthermore, "Where hostility to the United States, in any interior locality, shall be so great and so universal, as to prevent competent resident citizens from holding the Federal offices," he would make "no attempt to force obnoxious strangers among the people for that object," even though the "strict legal right may exist." And the mails, "unless repelled," would continue to be furnished. In doing this, "there needs to be no bloodshed or violence," he assured the country, and promised that "there shall be none, unless it be forced upon the national authority." Nowhere did Lincoln assert a power or a practice that he believed impossible of enforcement, or that he believed could be interpreted as "coercion" in its baldest and most belligerent form.

After he had announced his specific policy, he turned to those "who really love the Union," neither affirming nor denying that there were those "who seek to destroy the Union at all events," being "glad of any pretext to do it." In his original draft he had intended pointedly to observe, "Before entering upon so grave a matter as the destruction of our national Union, would it not be wise to ascertain precisely why we do it?" In his final draft, however, he blotted out the word "Union" and substituted for it the unifying and figurative word, "fabric," further inserting the words "with all its benefits, its memories and its hopes," thereby seeking to heighten feeling by suggesting appropriate attitudes.

Lincoln had now passed the climax of his remarks. The audience listened respectfully, with "intense interest, amid a stillness almost oppressive."[93] In the crowd behind the speaker sat Horace Greeley, momentarily expecting the crack of rifle fire.[94] At one point he thought it had come. The speaker stopped. But it was only a spectator crashing down through a tree. Otherwise, the crowd in the grounds "behaved very well."[95] Buchanan sat listening, and "looking as straight as he could at the toe of his right boot." Douglas, close by on Lincoln's right, listened attentively, showing that he was "apparently satisfied" as he "exclaimed, *sotto voce,* 'Good,' 'That's so,' 'No coercion,' and 'Good again.'" Chief Justice Taney "did not remove his eyes from Mr. Lincoln during the entire delivery."[96] Mr. Cameron stood with his back to the president, on the opposite side to Mr. Douglas, "peering off into the crowd." Senator Seward and the other cabinet officers-elect "kept themselves in the background."[97] Senator Wigfall of Texas, with folded arms, "leaned conspicuously in a Capitol doorway," listening to the inaugural, plainly wearing "contempt, defiance, derision, on his face, his pantomimic posture saying what he had said in the Senate, that the old Union was a corpse and the question was how to embalm it and conduct the funeral decently."[98] Thurlow Weed moved away from the crowd, reporting to General Scott at the top of the slope, "The Inaugural is a success," as the old general exclaimed "God be praised! God in his goodness be praised."[99] To a newspaper reporter surveying the scene, there was a "propriety and becoming interest which pervaded the vast assembly" and "impressed every spectator who had the opportunity of overlooking it."[100] The crowd "applauded repeatedly" and "at times, rapturously,"[101] particularly at points where Lincoln "announced his inflexible purpose to execute the laws and discharge his whole constitutional duty."[102] When he declared, "I hold that in the contemplation of international law, and of the Constitution, the Union of these States is perpetual," the "cheers were hearty and prolonged." When he said, "I shall take care that the laws of the Union be faithfully executed in all the States," he was met with a "tremendous shout of approval."[103]

The cheering over after his climactic assertion of principle, Lincoln moved, in the last half of the inaugural, to a reasoned discussion of related topics. He denied that any right plainly written in the Constitution had been violated, observing that majorities and minorities arise as a result of that class of questions for which no specific Constitutional answer has been provided. The alternative to accepting the "majority principles" was always either "anarchy or despotism." Not even the Supreme Court could serve as the final arbiter on questions "affecting the whole people," for unless it limited its activity to making decisions on specific "cases properly brought before them," the "people will have ceased to be their own rulers." He argued the impracticability of secession, contrasting it with the simple act of divorce between husband and wife who may "remain beyond the reach of each other," and concluded that "physically speaking, we cannot separate." Not even war was a satisfactory solution to difficulties, for "you cannot fight always," and after much "loss on both sides, and no gain on either," the "identical old questions" are again to be settled. "This country, with its institutions, belongs to the people who inhabit it," he insisted, urging that when the whole people "shall grow weary of the existing government, they can exercise their *constitutional* right of amending it, or their *revolutionary* right to dismember or overthrow it."

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[93] Seward, p. 516.

[94] Greeley, p. 404.

[95] *Diary of a Public Man,* p. 74.

[96] *The New York Times,* Mar. 5, 1861.

[97] Cincinnati *Commercial,* in Chicago *Daily Tribune,* Mar. 8, 1861.

[98] Sandburg, *War Years,* I, 123.

[99] Seward, pp. 516, 517; also see Boston *Evening Transcript,* Mar. 5, 1861.

[100] New York *Daily Tribune,* Mar. 5, 1861.

[101] Cincinnati *Commercial,* in Chicago *Daily Tribune,* Mar. 8, 1861.

[102] New York *Daily Tribune,* Mar. 5, 1861.

[103] Cincinnati *Commercial,* in Chicago *Daily Tribune,* Mar. 8, 1861.

Lincoln's appeal throughout was to the "patient confidence in the ultimate justice of the people." "Is there any better or equal hope, in the world?" he asked, even as he noted the human tendency of parties in dispute to insist with equal confidence on being in the "right." Rising to the position of impartial leader, he sought faith in a higher law, and in a disinterested Ruler: "If the Almighty Ruler of nations, with his eternal truth and justice, be on your side of the North or on yours of the South, that truth, and that justice, will surely prevail, by the judgment of this great tribunal, the American people."

Lincoln ended his address with both a challenge and a declaration of faith. "In *your* hands, my dissatisfied fellow countrymen, and not in *mine*, is the momentous issue of civil war. The government will not assail *you*." He was just about to take an oath, and to him an oath was a solemn pledge, not only in word, but in truth. It was an avowal of morality, binding him not only to duty to the people but to God, "the Almighty Ruler of nations." "*You* have no oath registered in Heaven to destroy the government," he pleaded in an attempt to secure the cooperation of all those who could help him in fulfilling the pledge he was to take, "while I shall have the most solemn one to 'preserve, protect and defend' it." His final appeal was to feeling rather than to reason. He undoubtedly realized that when men cannot achieve common ground through reason they may achieve it through the medium of feeling. "I am loth to close," he observed. "We are not enemies, but friends. We must not be enemies. Though passion may have strained, it must not break our bonds of affection." No longer the advocate, or even the president performing official duties, Lincoln, taking the advice of Seward, became the affectionate father, the benevolent and hopeful counselor, trusting not only in reason, but calling on "memory," the "patriot grave," the "heart and hearthstone," "the better angels of our nature" to "swell the chorus of the Union."

Chief Justice Taney stepped forward, shrunken, old, his hands trembling with emotion, and held out an open Bible. Lincoln laid his left hand upon it, raised his right hand, and repeated with a "firm but modest voice" the oath: "I, Abraham Lincoln, do solemnly swear that I will faithfully execute the office of President of the United States, and will, to the best of my ability, preserve, protect, and defend the Constitution of the United States." Lincoln was now president. Below, the crowd "tossed their hats, wiped their eyes, cheered at the top of their voices, hurrahed themselves hoarse"; "had the crowd not been so very dense, they would have demonstrated in more lively ways, their joy, satisfaction and delight."[104] Over on the slope the artillery boomed a salute to the sixteenth president of the United States. The crowd ebbed away, and Lincoln rode down Pennsylvania Avenue with Buchanan, bidding him good-bye at the presidential mansion.[105]

Lincoln did not have to wait long for a response from the country at large. As he delivered the address, little audiences unseen by the speaker dotted the land, clustering around newspaper offices and waiting for telegraphic reports of what was in the inaugural. The home folks whom Lincoln had bid an affectionate farewell three weeks before were among the most anxious of the unseen audiences. Whereas they spoke only for themselves at the time of the tearful departure, they were now ready to speak for the nation. "The Inaugural Address of our noble Chief Magistrate has electrified the whole country," they said. "It has satisfied people of all parties who love the Union and desire its preservation. In this city it gives almost universal satisfaction."[106] But occasionally there was a dissenting voice back home, particularly in the Democratic press throughout the North. While the Chicago *Daily Tribune* was "quite sure that no document can be found among American state papers embodying sounder wisdom and higher patriotism,—breathing kindlier feelings to all sections of the country,"[107] the Chicago *Times* denounced the inaugural as "a loose, disjointed, rambling affair," concluding that the Union was now "lost beyond hope."[108] While *The New York Times* observed that "conservative people are in raptures over the Inaugural," and that "its conciliatory tone, and frank, outspoken declaration of loyalty to the whole country, captured the hearts of many heretofore opposed to Mr. Lincoln,"[109] the New York *Herald* found that "the Inaugural is not a crude performance—it abounds in traits of craft and cunning. It bears marks of indecision, and yet of strong coercion proclivities. . . . It is neither candid nor statesmanlike; nor does it possess any essential dignity or patriotism. It would have caused a Washington to mourn, and would have inspired a Jefferson, Madison, or Jackson with contempt."[110] There were those in Maine who found it a "poor, weak, trashy affair, a standing disgrace to the country, and a fit commentary on the fanaticism and unreasonableness which made him President."[111] Some in Pennsylvania found it "one of the most awkwardly constructed official documents we have ever inspected," and "pitiably apologetical for the uprising of the Republican party. . . ."[112] And there were those in Ohio "who never expected to see a Black Republican peaceably inaugurated in this White Republican country . . . but now the Rubicon is passed," and the inaugural, "like its distinguished author," is "flat-footed. It is more *magazinish* in *sound* than in *style,* smelling strongly of gunpowder, and is '*coercion*' *all over,* as the South understands that word."[113]

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[104] *The New York Times*, Mar. 5, 1861.
[105] Sandburg, *War Years*, I, 122; also see Baringer, p. 334.
[106] Springfield *Daily Illinois State Journal*, Mar. 6, 1861.
[107] Mar. 5, 1861.
[108] Randall, *Lincoln the President*, I, 306.
[109] Mar. 5, 1861.

Whereas there was difference of opinion in the North, much of it stopped short of vehement denunciation. However, the South saw little hope from Lincoln, and expressed itself accordingly. "Mr. Lincoln's Inaugural Address is before our readers," observed the Richmond *Enquirer,* "couched in the cool, unimpassioned, deliberate language of the fanatic, with the purpose of pursuing the promptings of fanaticism even to the dismemberment of the Government with the horrors of civil war. . . . Civil war must now come."[114] The Baltimore *Sun* observed that "the Inaugural, as a whole, breathes the spirit of mischief," and found "no Union spirit in the address."[115] In Charleston, the *Mercury* could not imagine a "more lamentable display of feeble inability to grasp the circumstances of the momentous emergency. . . ."[116] "A very few words will do for this document," noted Atlanta critics. "It is a medley of ignorance, sanctimonious cant—and tender-footed bullyism."[117] "We presume nobody is astonished to hear that Secessionists regard the Inaugural as a 'declaration of war'," noted *The New York* Times. "Before the Inaugural has been read in a single Southern State, it is denounced, through the telegraph, from every Southern point, as a declaration of war."[118]

Just as the country searched the inaugural for the sentiments it contained, it also examined and appraised the language and style in which it was couched. The Toronto *Leader* could not admire the "tawdry and corrupt schoolboy style," even as it gave credit for its "good sense."[119] In Albany, observers found it "useless to criticize the style of the President's Inaugural when the policy it declares is fraught with consequences so momentous." Nevertheless, they paused to describe it as a "rambling, discursive, questioning, loose-jointed stump speech." It consisted of "feeble rhetorical stuff."[120] While papers unfriendly to Lincoln were finding it inferior in elegance, perspicuity, and all the graces of composition, papers friendly to him were finding the contrary to be the case. "It is clear as a mountain brook," commented a Detroit reporter. "The depth and flow of it are apparent at a glance." In Boston, the *Transcript* commented at length: "The style of the Address is as characteristic as its temper. 'Right words in their right places': this is the requirement of good rhetoric. Right words at the right times, should be the test by which we try the speech of statesmen; and this test Mr. Lincoln's address will bear. It has not one flaming expression in the whole course of its firm and explicit statements. The language is level to the popular mind,—the plain homespun language of a man accustomed to talk with 'the folks' and 'the neighbors,' the language of a man of vital common sense, whose words exactly fit his facts and thoughts."[121] Occasionally, the concluding paragraph was singled out for praise. In Indianapolis the reporter of the *Daily Journal* remarked: "The closing sentence, the only attempt at rhetorical display in the whole address, is singularly and almost poetically beautiful."[122]

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[110] In New York *Daily Tribune,* Mar. 7, 1861.

[111] Bangor *Union,* in New York *Daily Tribune,* Mar. 8, 1861.

[112] Philadelphia *Evening Journal,* in New York *Daily Tribune,* Mar. 7, 1861.

[113] Cleveland *Plain Dealer,* in Chicago *Daily Tribune,* Mar. 9, 1861.

[114] Mar. 5, 1861.

[115] In New York *Daily Tribune,* Mar. 7, 1861.

[116] Mar. 5, 1861.

[117] Atlanta *Southern Confederacy,* Mar. 5, 1861.

[118] Mar. 7, 1861.

Any fair-minded critic, removed from the passions of the times, must find himself much more in agreement with those observers who believed the inaugural met the "requirements of good rhetoric" having "right words in their right places" than with those who labeled it "feeble rhetorical stuff." One who studies the revisions in phrase and word in the various drafts of the inaugural must become aware that Lincoln was concerned not only with using the right argument, but with using words cautiously and purposefully, to obtain a desired effect from his listeners and from his potential readers.[123] The desire for clearness, the deside to subdue passion, the desire to manifest the integrity and dignity befitting a statesman in a responsible position—these were the factors that influenced him in the composition of the inaugural.

One of the most marked characteristics of Lincoln's rhetoric was directness. By it he attempted to achieve the appearance of candor and honesty, traits that were eminently significant to the success of the inaugural, considering the doubts and suspicions that were prevalent regarding his integrity.

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[119] In New York *Daily Tribune*, Mar. 7, 1861.

[120] Albany *Atlas and Argus*, Mar. 5, 1861, in *Northern Editorials on Secession,* Howard Cecil Perkins, ed. (New York, 1942), II, 628.

[121] Mar. 5, 1861.

[122] In New York *Daily Tribune*, Mar. 7, 1861.

[123] Randall, "Lincoln and the Governance of Men," pp. 327–352.

From the opening sentence to the conclusion one notes the unmistakable honesty and straightforwardness that reside in direct address. "I appear before you," he began, "to address you briefly, and to take, in your presence, the oath prescribed by the Constitution of the United States. . . ." Again, he observed, "I have no purpose, directly, or indirectly to interfere with the institution of slavery in the states where it exists"; "I now reiterate these sentiments"; "I take the official oath to-day, with no mental reservations"; "*You* have no oath registered in Heaven to destroy the government, while *I* shall have the most solemn one to 'preserve, protect and defend' it." Direct and forthright throughout, he could scarcely have used words to better advantage in emphasizing his honesty and integrity.

What doubts there were pertaining to inadequacies traceable to his humble origins and his lack of formal education must in some wise have been dispelled by his clearness, his accuracy, and his freedom from the awkward expression or the simple idiom of the western stump speaker. Lincoln had felt his inadequacies when he addressed an eastern audience of educated men at Cooper Union and was uncomfortable. In his inaugural, prepared for an audience that ranged over the whole country, he had been careful to use language that was sustained in its dignity. Seward, sometimes known for his polished expression, had given him some aid in the choice of the proper word. Lincoln accepted advice in such word changes as "acquiesce" instead of "submit," "constituted" instead of "constructed," "void" instead of "nothing," "repelled" instead of "refused," and he also accepted such a change of phrase as "imperfectly supports the law itself" for "is against the law itself." Although the changes are minor, they reflect Lincoln's desire for correctness and conciseness. On his own better judgment, he deleted the one extended metaphor that appeared in the original draft. "I am, rather, for the old ship, and the chart of the old pilots," he had originally written, with some of the tang and flavor of his speech in addressing popular western audiences. "If, however, the people desire a new, or an altered vessel, the matter is exclusively their own, and they can move in the premises, as well without as with an executive recommendation." The figure was not equal in elevation to the rest of his remarks. His final draft read simply, "I cannot be ignorant of the fact that many worthy and patriotic citizens are desirous of having the National Constitution amended. While I make no recommendation of amendments, I fully recognize the rightful authority of the people over the whole subject. . . ." Such phrasing, simple in its dignity, undoubtedly was more appropriate and suited to his needs.

That Lincoln sought to control the behavior of his audience and the reader through the appropriately effective word is apparent throughout the address. There are times when even the level of specificity and concreteness, usually thought to be virtues of style, is altered in favor of the more general word or allusion. For instance, Lincoln had originally intended to say, "why may not South Carolina, a year or two hence, arbitrarily, secede from a new

Southern Confederacy . . . ?" Finally, however, he avoided being specific, altering his remarks to read "why may not any portion of a new Confederacy, a year or two hence, arbitrarily secede again . . . ?" Again, the ridicule in his assertion, "The Union is less perfect than before, which contradicts the Constitution, and therefore is absurd," is eliminated and reason is substituted: "The Union is less perfect than before the Constitution, having lost the vital element of its perpetuity." He sometimes chose the longer statement in preference to the sharp, pointed word or phrase, if by a longer expression he could avoid truculence or the pointing of an accusing finger. Such a phrase as "be on your side of the North, or on yours of the South" aided considerably in creating an image of impartiality, and was to be preferred for the shorter, but divisive phrase, "be on our side or yours." The changes that he made in the direction of fullness rather than compression were designed to aid in clearness, exactness, and completeness, for the country expected him to express himself fully on the disturbing problems of the time.

The close of Lincoln's address, often cited for its poetic beauty, reflects not only his aesthetic sense, but perhaps more importantly, his power of using words to evoke images conducive to controlling response. As is very well known, Lincoln was not merely trying to be eloquent when he closed the address. He achieved eloquence and cadenced beauty through his direct attempt to be "affectionate," Seward having reminded him that perhaps feeling should supplement reason. An image of great-heartedness, great humility, and great faith resulted when Lincoln rephrased Seward's suggestion in his own style. It was his final declaration of faith and had in it the emotional intensity that often accompanies the hoped-for but unknown. It was his final plea for a course of action befitting "friends."

Thirty-nine days after Lincoln delivered his inaugural address Fort Sumter was fired upon. Civil war had begun. Lincoln had sought to save the Union by carefully reasoned argument, by regard for the feelings and rights of all the people, and by a solemn avowal of justice and integrity.[124] That the inaugural alone could not prevent war is surely insufficient ground to condemn it for ineptness. In speechmaking as in life, "not failure, but low aim is crime." Lincoln had tried to reach the people who were vitally concerned. But the South was not largely represented at the inaugural occasion. And the address when published in southern papers was incompletely presented and badly mangled. In a very large sense it did not reach the section of the country most vitally concerned. There were many divisive forces,[125] and these had gained great momentum by the time Lincoln addressed the American people. The South accepted the burden of his challenge: "In *your* hands, my dissatisfied fellow countrymen, and not in *mine*, is the momentous issue of civil war."

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[124] For other interpretations of Lincoln's motivation in the pre-Sumter period, see Charles W. Ramsdell, "Lincoln and Fort Sumter," *Jour. of Southern History*, III (1937), 259–288; Kenneth M. Stampp, *And the War Came*, p. 203. For refutation of views interpreting Lincoln as being "provocative" or as being largely concerned with absolving himself from blame if war came, see Randall, *Constitutional Problems Under Lincoln*, p. xv; *idem, Lincoln the Liberal Statesman*, Ch. IV.

[125] Howard K. Beale, "What Historians Have Said About the Causes of the Civil War," in Merle E. Curti, ed., *Theory and Practice in Historical Study: A Report of*

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the Committee on Historiography, Social Science Research Council (New York, 1946), pp. 53–102; Avery Craven, "Coming of the War Between the States: An Interpretation," *Jour. of Southern History*, II (1936), 303–322.

Index

Academic freedom, 75–76, 78, 82, 83
Adams, Charles Francis, *quoted,* 37
Adams, Ephraim Douglas, 50
Adams, John, 21, 148, 326
Adams, John Quincy, 148; *quoted,* 99
Adams, Samuel, 57, 60
Aeschylus, 399
Agar, Herbert, 42
Agassiz, Louis, 109
Alabama Resolutions, 175, 187, 275
Alexander, P. W., 358
American Anti-Slavery Society, 249
American party, *see* Know-Nothing Party
Amherst College, 248, 291
Anderson, Robert, 327, 375
Andrew, John A., 199, 200, 362, 368, 369–371, 375, 376, 377, 378, 384; *quoted,* 203, 370–371; Massachusetts inaugural address, 369–371
Andrews, Garnett, 351
Andrews, S. G., 36
Anti-Mason party, 32
Antioch College literary societies, 73, 81; Star, 73 n.
Antislavery societies: American, 249; Essex County, 139; Massachusetts, 133-151; Michigan, 136; New England, 139; Pennsylvania, 242–261
André, John, 380
Arnold, Benedict, 380
Arnold, Carroll C., 310
Asbury, Francis, 166
Ashley-Montagu, M. F., 146
Ashmun, George, 199; *quoted,* 200–201
Avery, W. W., 181; *quoted,* 179

Bacon, John G., 86, 88, 89
Backus, Franklin T., 87; *quoted,* 389
Baker, Edward D., 403
Baker, George E., 35; *quoted,* 42–43
Baker, Henry S., 216
Baldwin, O. P., 110
Baldwin, Roger, 380, 381–382, 384
Baltimore Methodist Conference, 169
Bancroft, Frederic, *quoted,* 43, 44
Banks, Nathaniel P., 60 n., 61, 62, 362, 368–369, 372, 375; *quoted,* 368–369; Massachusetts gubernatorial address, 368–369
"Barbarism of Slavery" speech by Lovejoy, 114–132
Baringer, William E., *quoted,* 222
Barksdale, Ethelbert, 63, 67, 115, 125, 185, 189; *quoted,* 61
Barnard, Eusebius, 247, 248
Barringer, Daniel M., 383; *quoted,* 383
Bartholemew, Seth, 86
Bartow, Francis S., 356
Bates College, 56
Bates, E. R., 82
Bates, Edward, 207, 208, 213
Battelle, Gordon, 163, 164, 169, 170; *quoted,* 163, 164
Bayard, Chevalier, 186
Bayard, James A., 273
Beach, Erasmus, 56, 58, 62
Beale, Charles Lewis, 115
Beck, N. B., 331
Beck, R. L., 306
Becker, Carl, *quoted,* vi
Beecher, Edward, 82
Beecher, Henry Ward, 2, 110, 113, 129, 292 n.
Beecher, Lyman, 108, 113
Belden, George W., 87, 90, 92
Bell, John, 45, 79, 194, 217, 218, 222, 226, 228, 230, 231, 232, 233, 234, 235, 236, 237, 239, 241, 264, 270, 274, 275, 277, 278, 335, 344, 349, 359
Benjamin, Judah P., *quoted,* 394
Benjamin, Park, 108
Bennett, James Gordon, 56, 116, 128, 251
Benning, Henry L., 348, 349, 353
Benton, Thomas Hart, 366
Beveridge, Albert J., *quoted,* 268 n.

Bigler, William, 311, 317, 320, 322, 323, 325, 328
Birney, James G., 140
Black, Jeremiah Sullivan, 93 n.
Blackstone, William, 20
Black, Austin, 362, 364–366, 368, 370, 375; *quoted*, 365–366
Blair, Francis P., 366, 378, 402 n.
Blair, Francis P., Jr., 213, 366
Blake, Harrison G. O., 129
Bliss, George, 87
Blondin, Charles, 154
Boas, Frank, *quoted*, 146 n.
Bohman, George V., 114
Bond, Thomas, 168, 169
Bonham, Milledge L., 125
Boutwell, George S., 383, 384; *quoted*, 385–386
Bowdoin College, 55, 56, 118
Boycotts, southern commercial, 117
Braden, Waldo W., 225
Braddock, Edward, 346
Breckinridge, John C., 49, 79, 171, 178, 218, 225, 227, 228, 230, 232, 233, 235, 236, 237, 238, 262, 264, 265, 268, 270, 271, 272, 275, 276, 277, 278, 310, 311, 335, 336, 339, 345, 349, 353, 359
Brinkerhoff, Jacob, 94
British West Indies, emancipation in, 146, 346
Brockenbrough, John W., 384
Bronson, Greene C., 384
Brooks, Preston, 30, 393
Brown, Albert G., 52 n., 393
Brown, Bedford, 183
Brown, John, 7, 25, 45, 72, 74, 110, 116, 118, 122, 124, 126, 136, 140, 143, 175, 245, 246, 246 n., 255, 261, 294, 326, 332, 335, 337, 339, 353, 354, 355, 362, 369, 370, 385, 393
Brown, Joseph E., 334, 335, 345, 348, 359
Brown, William T., 228
Browning, Orville E., 208, 216, 218–220; *quoted*, 202, 203, 218, 219, 220, 402; speech at Springfield rally, 218–220
Brownlow, William G., vii, 1–28, 234; *quoted*, 235; debate with Pryne, 1–28
Brownlow-Pryne debate, vii, 1–28
Bryant, William Cullen, 399, 400
Buchanan, James, 30, 34, 44 n., 51, 53, 62, 64, 65, 73, 91, 175, 179, 182, 183, 184, 190, 201, 217, 218, 230, 269, 272, 283, 327, 336, 347, 364, 398, 399, 407, 409; *quoted*, 43, 49
Buffington, James, 115
Burke, Edmund, 20
Burnett, Henry C., 115, 116
Burrow, N., *quoted*, 179
Bushnell, Simeon, 87, 89, 90, 91, 93, 94, 95, 97
Butler, Benjamin F., 54, 62, 180, 181, 309; *quoted*, 179, 180; speech at Democratic Convention, 181–182
Byron, George G., 253

Calhoun, John C., 4, 47, 66, 98, 99, 102, 105, 139, 153, 210
Callaghan, J. Calvin, 242
Calvin, John, 12
Cameron, Simon, 197, 207, 208, 363, 407
Campaign of 1840, 194
Campaign of 1856, 196
Campaign of 1860, 171–192, 193–211, 212–224, 225–241, 262–278
Cartter, David K., 213; *quoted*, 209
Case, Henry, 216
Cass, Lewis, 276
Chalmers, James R., 233
Channing, Edward, *quoted*, 106
Chapin, E. H., 109, 110
Charleston Convention, 171–191, 214, 275, 313
Chase, Salmon P., 45, 93, 94, 96, 174, 207, 383, 387; *quoted*, 388
Cheever, George B., 246
Childs, Lydia Maria, 117
Chittenden, Lucius E., 382, 383; *quoted*, 384
Choate, Rufus, 54, 62
Cicero, 20, 148
Cincinnati Platform, 175, 179, 180, 181, 186, 275
Civil liberties, 25, 28, 108, 122, 123, 126, 131, 202, 219, 287, 293
Claiborne, M. C., 186 n.
Clark, Robert D., 152
Clay, Henry, vi, 31, 48, 66 n., 139, 142, 143, 146, 210, 215, 217, 218, 219, 269, 318, 329, 402
Clay, James B., 382; *quoted*, 385
Clemens, Jere, 230
Cleveland, Chauncey F., 386; *quoted*, 202, 203, 389–390
Clingman, Thomas L., 393
Cobb, Howell, 171, 273, 334, 339, 349, 351, 352, 353, 354, 355, 359
Cobb, Thomas R. R., 66 n., 332, 336–339, 341, 349, 353, 355, 356, 359; *quoted*, 337–339, 353, 357; speech in Georgia secession debate, 336–339
Cochran, William C., 86, 92, 93; *quoted*, 89
Cochrane, John, 186; *quoted*, 180
Codding, Ichabod, 119
Coercion, of seceding states, 79, 396, 397, 405–406, 410
Cogswell, J. B. D., 285

Colfax, Schuyler, 32, 213
Collamer, Jacob, 311, 315, 316, 328
College students, *see* Students
Collier, T. Maxwell, *quoted,* 45
Collins, N. D., 228
Colonization of Negroes, 74, 250
Columbia Seminary, 293
"Common man," in politics, 193–194
Commercial boycotts by the South, 117
Committee of Thirteen (Senate), 310–330, 378
Committee of Thirty-Three (House), 378
Compromise, *see* Crittenden compromise resolutions
  See also Washington Peace Conference
Compromise of 1850, vi, 21, 30, 48, 66 n., 85, 102, 177, 329, 333
Confederacy, southern plans for, 303, 312, 313, 329, 334, 335, 337–339, 348, 353, 394
Conference, Methodist General, 152–170
Conkling, Roscoe, 34 n.
Constitution, and the slavery issue, 18–20, 22, 39, 58, 59, 85, 99, 103, 142, 146–147, 148, 180, 202, 204, 219, 246, 256, 257, 260, 266, 269, 341, 367, 372–373, 374
Constitutional Convention, 179–180, 380
Constitutional Union party, 234, 311, 312, 333–334, 344, 358–359
Conventions: 1856 Republican, 202, 204; 1860 Democratic, 171–192; 1860 Republican, 193–211
Cook, Ike, 182
Coombe, Pennell, 156, 157, 158, 160, 165, 166, 168; *quoted,* 157–158; speech at Methodist Conference, 157–158
Coombs, Leslie, 234
"Cooper Union Address" by Lincoln, 116, 143, 144, 148, 268, 400, 401, 412
Corwin, Thomas, 122, 213
Coulter, E. Merton, *quoted,* 3, 4, 6, 22, 23
Cox, S. S., 115, 117, 118, 120, 122, 125, 128
Crane, James L., 163; *quoted,* 163
Crary, B. F., 161, 162; *quoted,* 162
Craven, Avery, *quoted,* vi, 42 n., 354
Crawford, George W., 355, 357
Crawford, Martin J., 115, 116
Crisfield, John W., *quoted,* 389
Crittenden, John J., 234, 311, 315, 317, 318, 319, 320, 322, 323, 324, 325, 326, 327, 328, 352, 379, 391, 395; *quoted,* 183, 323, 324
Crittenden compromise resolutions, 79, 314–315, 318–319, 320, 321, 322, 352, 379, 381, 391, 395
Crocker, Lionel, 262
Crozier, Hiram P., 244, 247, 250, 252, 253, 256; *quoted,* 249–250, 256
Curtin, Andrew, 245, 258, 363–364, 375–377, 391; *quoted,* 376–377; Pennsylvania inaugural address, 375–377
Curtis, George William, 73, 108, 110, 113, 199, 200; *quoted,* 205; speech at Republican Convention, 205
Cushing, Caleb, 54, 55 n., 56, 57, 58, 62, 66 n., 175

Darlington, Chandler, 256; *quoted,* 244, 247
Davis, David, 207, 402 n.
Davis, E. M., 244
Davis, Jefferson, 45, 51–70, 72, 80, 106, 189, 225, 228, 232–233, 239, 273, 275, 311, 314, 317, 320, 321, 322, 325, 326, 327, 328; *quoted,* 378, 395–396; speech at Faneuil Hall, 53–61; speech to Mississippi legislature, 62–69
Davis Resolutions, 176, 182
Debate, nature and conditions of, 71, 83–84, 131, 168, 176, 178, 179–180, 186, 191, 195, 199–200, 206, 317, 328, 329–330, 358–359
  See also Literary societies
Declaration of Independence, 20, 142, 145, 205
Dejarnette, Daniel C., 115
Democratic Conventions: Baltimore, 178, 191, 226, 229, 236; Charleston, 171–190, 226, 229, 236; Richmond, 178, 191
Demosthenes, 402
Depravity: northern, 22–24, 177, 299, 401; southern, 22–24, 287, 293–294
Dickey, Hugh T., 119
Dickinson, Anna, 247, 252–260; speech to Pennsylvania Anti-Slavery Society, 252–260
District of Columbia, slavery in, 144, 145, 246–247, 247 n., 333, 381
Dodge, Augustus C., 174
Dodge, Ossian E., 213
Dodge, William E., 383, 387; *quoted,* 383
Donelson, Andrew Jackson, 235
Doniphan, Alexander, *quoted,* 384
Doolittle, James R., 213, 216, 285, 311, 315, 316, 323, 328, 369
"Doom of Slavery" speech by Schurz, 280, 282
Douglas, Stephen A., 29, 44 n., 45, 51, 52, 53 n., 55, 63, 64, 73, 120, 139, 142, 144, 145, 171, 172, 173, 174, 175, 176, 177, 178, 179, 180, 182, 184, 185, 186, 188, 189, 190, 192, 194, 214, 215, 217, 218, 220, 221, 222, 223, 225, 227, 228, 229, 231, 232, 236, 237, 238, 239, 241, 283, 311,

Douglas, Stephen A. (*continued*) 319, 320, 322, 323, 324, 325, 326, 327, 328, 330, 335, 349, 407; *quoted*, 144, 238, 239, 407; campaign in the South, 262–278; speech in Memphis campaign, 237–239, 272–273; speeches at Norfolk and Raleigh, 263–268; speech at Montgomery, 275–276
Douglass, Frederick, 2, 7, 17, 72, 138, 147
Douglass, H. Ford, 133–151; speech at Framingham, 133–151
Dred Scott decision, 8, 21, 64, 72, 73, 79, 138, 144, 179, 180, 202, 272, 334, 393
DuBose, John Witherspoon, *quoted*, 232
Dueling, 74, 76, 126, 183
DuFau, Louis, 270
Dumond, Dwight, *quoted*, 14, 17
Dun, Boyd and Co. newsletter, *quoted*, 361
Durbin, John P., 159, 167; *quoted*, 159–160, 167; speech at Methodist Conference, 159–160

Economic sectional issues, 18–19, 42, 176, 245, 261, 280, 284, 286, 294, 297, 299, 300–301, 332, 336, 339, 342, 363, 367, 373, 375, 376, 379, 385, 387–388, 393
Edwards, Weldon N., *quoted*, 191
Emancipation: abolitionist proposals for, 18, 73, 130, 219; Congressional consideration of, 117; by Great Britain, 144, 346
Emerson, Ralph Waldo, 109, 110, 113, 399
Emancipation Convention, 138
End of the Irrepressible Conflict, 49
Essex County Anti-Slavery Society, 139
Ethnical controversy about Negroes: equality, 139–140, 145–146, 148, 219; inferiority, 111–112, 114, 142, 145
Eubank, Wayne C., 291
Euclid, 404
Evarts, William M., 199
Everett, Edward, 54, 56, 60, 62, 109, 113, 141, 217, 226, 231, 234
Ewing, Thomas, S., 383; *quoted*, 389, 391

"Farewell Address" by Washington, 337
Faris, D. C., 79
Farnsworth, John Franklin, 115, 116
Farragut, David G., 309
Ferguson, W. D., 234
Ferree, James J., 216
Fessenden, William P., 130; *quoted*, 31–32
Field, David Dudley, 383, 390; *quoted*, 386, 388
Fillmore, Millard, 344
Fire-eaters, 174, 184
"First Inaugural Address" by Lincoln, 392–414
Fishing bounties, 339, 342
Fitch, J. M., 96
Floy, James, 155
Fogg, George G., *quoted*, 314
Foley, J. B., 174
Foote, Henry S., 230, 272
Foreign voters, 225, 230, 240–241, 279, 282, 283, 284–285
Forman, S. E., *quoted*, 42 n.
Forney, John W., 270
Forsyth, John, 230, 270, 276
Foster, Abby Kelley, 137 n., 150
Foster, Henry D., 258
Foster, Stephen S., 137 n.
"Fourth of July Oration" by Douglass, 133–151
Franklin, Benjamin, 21, 180, 386
Franklin, Thomas E., 390
Free Negroes, 8, 15–16, 17, 75, 150–151, 249
Freeport Doctrine, 64, 143–144, 180, 222, 269, 272, 273
Frelinghuysen, Frederick T., 384; *quoted*, 386, 387, 389
Frémont, John C., 7, 33, 34, 60–61, 75, 195, 283
French, Ezra B., 115
Fugitive Slave Law, 8, 12, 21–22, 25, 77, 85, 86, 87, 88, 90, 91, 93, 94, 142, 147 n., 190, 245, 246, 251, 321, 322, 324, 326, 334, 337, 346, 348, 365, 370, 381, 403
  See also Oberlin-Wellington Rescue Case
Furness, William, 253

Galbreath, Charles B., *quoted*, 91
Gara, Larry, 360
Garrison, William Lloyd, 8, 97, 134, 136, 137, 137 n., 141, 142, 149, 168, 245, 253, 260, 369
Gartrell, Lucius J., 116
General Conference, Methodist, 152–170
Georgia Platform, 333–334, 348, 355
Georgia secession convention, 355–358
Georgia secession debate, 331–359
Georgia, University of, 292
German voters, 8, 225, 230, 240–241, 279, 281, 282, 283, 284–285
Giddings, Joshua R., 2, 79, 94, 96, 118, 120, 199, 200, 205; *quoted*, 202, 205
Gillespie, Joseph, 216
Glenn, D. C., 189; *quoted*, 190; speech at Democratic Convention, 189–190
Godwin, Parke, 109
Goethe, 148
Goodrich, Aaron, 198
Goodrich, John Z., 387; *quoted*, 384, 384–385, 391
Graham, Mary W., 108

Granger, Francis, 383; *quoted,* 387–388, 390
Grayson, William J., *quoted,* 30
Greeley, Horace, 29, 30, 47, 62, 69, 108, 109, 113, 129, 150, 199, 204, 209, 250, 340, 361, 380, 381; *quoted,* 30, 32, 47, 50 n., 350–351, 379, 391, 395
Green, James S., 273
Grew, Mary, 246, 247, 248, 256
Griffiths, Alfred, 163, 164; *quoted,* 163, 164
Grimes, James W., 311, 315, 316, 323, 328
Griswold, Seneca O., 87
Grossbeck, W. S., 110
Grow, Galusha A., 116, 130
Gubernatorial inaugural addresses, 360–377
Gulley, Halbert E., 212
Gunderson, Robert Gray, 378; *quoted,* vi
Guthrie, James, 381; *quoted,* 382, 387, 388
Guthrie, Warren, 85

Hackleman, Pleasant A., *quoted,* 385
Hale, John P., 32
Hall, George A., 347; *quoted,* 353
Halstead, Murat, 179, 186, 197; *quoted,* 172, 179, 184, 196, 198, 199, 208
Hamilton, Alexander, 21, 386
Hamilton, James, 228
Hamlin, 215, 260, 364
Hammond, James N., 40, 273; *quoted,* 45
Hancock, John, 57
Hardeman, Thomas, Jr., 127
Harper's Ferry raid, 110, 136–137, 143, 176, 245, 246, 294, 326, 332, 335, 337, 339, 370, 393
Harris, W. L., 155, 163, 165, 348
Hartford Convention, 370
Harvey, L. P., 279, 280, 285
Haskin, John B., 116 n.
Hatfield, R. M., 161; *quoted,* 161
Haven, Erastus O., 160
Hay, John, 350
Haynes, Landon C., 232, 233, 234
"Headship of Christ" sermon by Palmer, 308 n.
Hedrick, Benjamin, 75
Helper, Hinton, 18, 74, 79, 118, 123, 124, 125, 129
Henry, Patrick, 116
Herndon, William H., 402; *quoted,* 47, 399
Hesseltine, William B., 360; *quoted,* vi, vii, viii, 1
Hickman, John, 116, 129
Hicks, John, 170
Hill, Benjamin H., 234, 334, 335, 336, 344–347, 348, 351, 354, 355, 356, 358, 359; *quoted,* 345–347, 355; speech in Georgia secession debate, 344–347
Hireling and the Slave, 30
Hitchcock, Orville A., 133
Hitchcock, Reuben, 384
Holbrook, Josiah, 108, 113
Holmes, John, v
Homer, 148
Homestead Bill, 117, 204, 316, 364
Hone, Philip, 108
Hopkins, Mark, 2
Hostettler, Gordon F., 1
House Committee of Thirty-Three, 378
"House Divided" speech by Lincoln, 176, 207, 401
Howard, John H., 348, 349
Howard, Thomas C., 348, 349
Howe, George, 293
Humphries, D. C., *quoted,* 274
Hunt, Washington, *quoted,* 33
Hunter, Robert M. T., 273, 311, 314, 317, 319, 323, 327
Hunter, William, 166, 167
Hyer, Tom, 196

Illinois College, 82; literary societies, 72, 81; Phi Alhpa, 78 n.; Sigma Pi, 72, 78 n.
Inaugural addresses: Lincoln, 392–414; state governors, 360–377
Indiana University literary societies, 72, 77–80; Athenian, 72, 77–80
Internal improvements, 103, 204, 283, 293
Irish voters, 225, 230, 240–241
"Irrepressible Conflict" speech by Schurz, 281, 288
"Irrepressible Conflict," speech by Seward, 29–50, 63, 65, 66, 67, 69, 176, 207
Iverson, Alfred, 45, 317, 334, 348, 349, 351, 352, 359

Jackson, Andrew, 234, 333, 366, 371, 402, 410
Jackson, Caleb, *quoted,* 248
Jackson, Claiborne Fox, 366–368, 373, 375; *quoted,* 367; Missouri inaugural address, 366–368
James, Amaziah, *quoted,* 388
Jefferson, Thomas, v, 15, 21, 44 n., 103, 105, 122, 143, 193, 203, 248, 250, 252, 410
Jefferson College literary societies, 81, 82 n.; Franklin, 81 n.; Philo, 81, 83
Jenkins, Charles J., 334, 355
Jennings, Anderson, 85, 89
Johnson, Andrew, 225, 236, 237, 311; speech in Memphis campaign, 236–237

Johnson, Herschel V., 334, 335, 336, 348, 351, 353, 355, 356, 357, 358, 359; *quoted,* 277, 278, 348, 349, 350, 355, 356-357; speech in Georgia secession debate, 356–357
Johnson, Oliver, 242, 244, 245, 248, 253; *quoted,* 247
Johnson, Reverdy, 384, 387; *quoted,* 383
Johnston, Joe, 94
Jones, John J., 348, 349
"Jubilation Speech" by Schurz, 279–290
Judd, Norma B., 207, 213; *quoted,* 201, 209

Kansas-Nebraska controversy, 29, 32, 33, 83, 85, 102, 174, 194, 217, 220, 221, 229, 269, 272, 294, 328, 334, 339, 341, 393
Keitt, Laurence M., 105, 116
Kellen, A. J., 228
Kellogg, William, 115, 116
Kenyon, William S., 115
King, John A., 199
King, Leicester, 119
King, Rufus (1755–1827), 21
King, Rufus (1814–1876), 284
King, T. Starr, 109
Kingsley, Calvin, 155, 156, 157, 164, 165, 166, 167, 168; *quoted,* 167; speech at Methodist Conference, 167
Kinkel, Gottfried, 280
Kluckhorn, Clyde, 146
Know-Nothing party, 5, 32, 33, 40, 53, 62, 207, 230, 241, 334, 335, 344, 355–356, 373
Knox College, 73; literary societies, 72, 73, 81, 83; Adelphi, 73 n., 74; Gnothautii, 73 n., 74, 77 n.
Koerner, Gustave, 208, 213, 216, 224
Korngold, Ralph, *quoted,* 136, 143
Kozta, Martin, 148

Lamar, L. Q. C., 127, 225, 232
Lamb, William, 265; *quoted,* 264
Lanahan, John, 169
Land question, 103
See also Homestead Bill
Lane, Henry S., 208, 209, 363, 371–372, 373, 375; *quoted,* 210–211, 372; Indiana inaugural address, 371–372
Lane, Joseph, 171, 184, 227
Langston, Charles, 87, 93, 94, 95
Langston, J. M., 138
Lawrence, Effingham, 182
Leacock, W. T., 307
League of United Southerners, 61
Lecompton Constitution, 51, 65, 73, 230, 231
Lecompton Constitution (*continued*)
See also Kansas-Nebraska controversy
Lee, Jesse, 166
Lee, Robert E., 94
Leland, A. W., 293
Lieber, Francis, 108
Lincoln, Abraham, vii, viii, 30, 37, 40, 41, 43, 71, 72, 74, 77, 78, 79, 82, 108, 109, 130, 139, 141, 142, 143, 144, 145, 147, 148, 150, 151, 180, 192, 197, 206, 207, 208, 209, 210, 215, 216, 217, 218, 222, 223, 234, 235, 237, 238, 243, 245, 246, 260, 262, 264, 265, 268, 276, 278, 280, 282, 283, 286, 287, 289, 294, 295, 315, 320, 322, 324, 327, 335, 337, 338, 340, 341, 342, 345, 346, 347, 348, 349, 350, 351, 361, 362, 363, 364, 366, 373, 374, 375, 376, 379, 388, 389, 391, 392–414; *quoted,* 29 n., 40, 47, 64 n., 143, 144, 216, 282, 318; inaugural address, 392–414
Lincoln, Mayor, 56
Lincoln-Douglas campaign, 120, 143–144, 180, 222, 318, 398, 399
Lincoln's inaugural address, vii, viii, 289, 392–414
Literary societies, 71–84; in colleges with divided loyalties, 77–80; in Republican-abolition colleges, 72–74; in secessionist colleges, 75–77
Locke, David, *quoted,* 399
Logan, Stephen T., 384, 390; *quoted,* 388
Lomas, Charles W., 71
Loomis, A. W., 387
Loring, Ellis Gray, 140
Lothrop, T. K., *quoted,* 43
Lovejoy, Elijah, 82, 118, 140, 215
Lovejoy, Owen, 114–132, 257; speech in Congress, 114–132
Lowe, James K., 86
Lowell, James Russell, 148
Lowndes, Rawlins, 104
Lowry, Robert, *quoted,* 178–179
Luther, Martin, 12
Luthin, Richard, *quoted,* 143
Lyceum movement, 108; in Cincinnati, 109–110; in Cleveland, 109; in Iowa, 109–110; Lecturers, 108, 109, 110, 113; in Ohio, 109–110; in New England, 110; in Philadelphia, 110; and sectional controversy, 108–113
Lyman, Ansel, 86
Lynching, 76, 239

Macaulay, Thomas B., 148
McDuffie, George, 102
McKim, J. M., 248, 251, 253; *quoted,* 244
McQueen, John, 125

McRae, John J., 116
Madison, James, 21, 386, 410
Mahan, Asa, 96
"Man and Climate" lecture by Taylor, 111–113
Marcy, William L., 66 n.
Marietta College literary societies, 81; Alpha Kappa, 78 n.; Psi Gamma, 78 n.
Marion, Francis, 116, 287
Marshall, S. S., 174
Martin, Elbert S., 116, 125
Martin, William, 358
Marvel, Ike, 108
Mason, James M., 273
Mason, John Y., 369
Massachusetts Anti-Slavery Society, 133–151
May, Samuel, Jr., 137
Maynard, Horace, 234, 235
Means, Alexander, 355, 356, 357, 388; *quoted,* 358
Mechanic's Institutes, 108, 109
Medary, Samuel, *quoted,* 49
Melville, Herman, 109
Memoir of Elijah P. Lovejoy, 118
Memphis campaign, 225–241
Mercantile Library Associations, 108, 109, 110
Merriman, Frances J., 137
Methodist church, schism over slavery, 152–153
Methodist General Conferences: (1844), 153, 159, 163, 167; (1856), 157, 167; (1860), 152–170
Mexican War, 199
Miami University literary societies, 78 n.; Erodelphian, 78 n.; Union, 78 n.
Michelangelo, 399
Michigan Anti-Slavery Society, 136
Michigan, University of, literary societies, 72; Literary Adelphi, 72, 73
Miles, W. P. (La.), 233
Miles, William Porcher (S.C.), 45, 125
Millward, William, 115
Milton, George Fort, *quoted,* 319
Missouri, University of, literary societies, 71, 80; Athenaean Literary, 71
Missouri Compromise, vi, 25, 79, 102, 217, 218, 221, 271, 352, 373, 381, 382, 393
Mitchell, Richard P., 86
Monroe, James, 21
Monroe, S. Y., 156, 163
Moody, Granville, 158, 163, 165; *quoted,* 158; speech at Methodist Conference, 158–159
Moore, James M., 100
Morehead, Charles S., 379, 387; *quoted,* 388
Morgan, Edwin D., 33, 193; *quoted,* 200, 201, 203–204
Morrill Bill, 376, 377
Morrill, Justin, 341
Morrill, Lot M., *quoted,* 389
Morris, Thomas, 167
Morton, Alexander, *quoted,* 182
Morton, Oliver P., 363, 372–373, 374, 375; *quoted,* 372–373; Indiana inaugural address, 372–375
Mott, James, 244, 245
Mott, Lucretia, 255; *quoted,* 244, 246
Murphy, T. C., 163

Napoleon, 38
Nashville Convention, 99
Navigation laws, 339, 342
Nebraska *see* Kansas-Nebraska controversy
Negroes; abolitionist orators, 150–151, 249; colonization of, 74, 250; equality of, 139–140, 145–146, 148, 219; freedmen, 8, 15–16, 17, 75; inferiority of, 111–112, 114, 142, 145; slaves, 15–18; suffrage, 145, 337
Nelson, Thomas A. R., 116, 235
Nevins, Allan, 42; *quoted,* 18, 19, 24, 29 n., 42 n., 47, 65 n.
New England Anti-Slavery Society, 136
New England Emigrant Aid Society, 199
Nichols, Marie Hochmuth, 392
Nichols, Roy F., *quoted,* 14
Nicholson, A. O. P., 236
Nicolay, John G., 350
Nisbet, Eugenius, 334, 355, 356, 357, 358
Nisbet, James A., 354
North Carolina, University of, 75; literary societies, 71–72, 77; Dialectic, 71, 76; Philanthropic, 75–76
Northern depravity, alleged, 22–24, 177, 299, 401
Northwest Ordinance, 219, 250, 268, 385
Northwestern University literary societies, 81 n.; Hinman, 81 n.
Noyes, William C., 119; *quoted,* 383
Nullification, 73, 98–99, 291, 332–333, 402
Nye, James W., 199

Oberlin College, 86, 96
Oberlin-Wellington Rescue Case, 85–97
Oglesby, Richard J., 216
Ohio College literary societies, 81; Athenian, 78 n.; Philomathean, 78 n.
Oliver, Robert T., 29
Orr, James L., 273, 355
Orth, Godlove, 387
Otterbein College literary societies, 81

"Ought Slavery To Be Perpetuated?" debate of Brownlow and Pryne, 1–28

Palmer, Benjamin Morgan, 291–309; Thanksgiving sermon, 291–309
Palmer, John M., 213, 216, 390
Panic of 1857, 176
Parker, Theodore, 2, 8, 34, 36 n., 40, 54 n., 140, 245; *quoted*, 47, 47 n.
Parrington, Vernon L., 82
Partridge, Isaac, 63, 69
Payne, Henry B., 174, 181, 182
Pearce, H. J., Jr., 351; *quoted*, 335
Peck, Henry E., 95
Pendleton, Louis B., *quoted*, 344
Pennsylvania Anti-Slavery Society annual meeting, 242–261
People's party, 8, 201–202, 363, 364, 376
Perkins, Lindsey S., 171
Perrit, H. Hardy, 98
Perry, Benjamin F., 175, 176; *quoted*, 98
Personal liberty laws, 324, 325, 326, 346, 365, 368, 370
Peyton, Balie, 233
Phi Kappa society, 292
Phillips, U. B., *quoted*, 335
Phillips, Wendell, 8, 117, 129, 134, 141, 142, 254, 260, 395; *quoted*, 379
Piatt, Donn, *quoted*, 30–31, 37
Pickens, Francis, 106
Pierce, Franklin, 52 n., 53 n., 56, 57, 66 n., 217
Pillsbury, Parker, 7, 137 n., 138, 149
"Plea for the Dissolution of the Union" by Phillips, 117
Plutarch, 399
Plymouth Oration, 31
Politics, influence of "common man" in, 193–194
Polk, James K., 366
Polk, William H., 233; *quoted*, 233
Pollard, Edward, *quoted*, 59
Pollock, James, 385, 386
Porter, William D., 117
Potter, John F., 115, 127
Potter-Pryor duel, 74
Polygamy, 114, 204, 221
Popular sovereignty, 63, 103, 179, 215, 221, 230, 238, 239, 264, 265–268, 274, 322
Powell, L. W., 310, 311, 316, 317
Prentice, George D., 402
Presbyterian church, schism over slavery, 292, 295, 296, 298, 308
Price, John, 86, 88, 89, 90, 91
Price, Rodman, M., *quoted*, 389, 390
Princeton Seminary, 291
Princeton University, 78 n.; Cliosophic Society, 78 n.
Pryne, Abram, vii, 1–28; debate with Brownlow, 1–28
Pryor, Roger A., 61, 114–115, 116, 121, 127, 128
Pugh, George E., 174, 187, 188, 192; *quoted*, 188; speech at Democratic convention, 187–189
Purvis, Robert, 243, 247, 248–252; speech to Pennsylvania Anti-Slavery Society, 248–252

Quincy, Edmund, 137, 149, 150

Rabelais, 399
Railroad construction, 72, 283
Ramsey, Alexander H., 318
Randall, Alexander, 281, 285; *quoted*, 282
Randall, James G., *quoted*, 399
Randall, Josiah, 179, 186, 189; *quoted*, 185
Raymond, Henry J., 49, 110, 371; *quoted*, 43, 46, 270, 361, 372
Reeder, Andrew H., 198
Reese, Augustus, 356
Reform, 79, 154, 243, 254, 254 n.
Religion and slavery, 1, 6, 11–14, 28, 58, 76, 82, 109, 123, 125, 152–170, 244, 246, 295, 301–302, 304, 306, 323, 332
Remond, C. L., 137 n.
Republican National Convention, 193–211, 281
Reynolds, Ota Thomas, 133
Rhetoric, nature and conditions of, 26, 105–106, 109, 168, 178, 179–180, 183, 184, 195, 199–200, 289, 294, 317, 319–320, 328–330, 331, 358–359, 368, 384, 389–390, 395, 406, 411–412, 413
Rhett, Edmund, 100
Rhett, Robert Barnwell, 40, 42, 61, 65, 98–107, 126, 129, 175, 192, 348, 394; speech at Grahamville, 98–107
Rice, Henry M., 311, 317, 326, 327, 328; *quoted*, 318
Richardson, Ralph, 51
Richardson, W. A., 174, 182, 189; *quoted*, 185; speech to Democratic Convention, 185–186
Riddle, Albert G., 87, 88, 90, 92, 93 n.
"Rights of the South Defended in the Pulpits" by Palmer and Leacock, 307
Rives, William C., 381, 384, 385, 387, 389
Robinson, Stuart, *quoted*, 292
Rogers, William O., *quoted*, 297, 304
Roman, J. Dixon, *quoted*, 386
Rublee, Horace, *quoted*, 281
Ruffin, Edmund, 99, 175, 232, 335, 348, 394
Ruffin, Thomas, 387, 389

Sales, John F., 236

Samuels, B. M., *quoted,* 179
Sanborn, F. B., 137 n.
Schlesinger, Arthur M., *quoted,* 4 n.
Schoolcraft, John L., 199
Schurz, Carl, 110, 113, 199, 200, 202, 213, 215; 279–290; 378, 402; *quoted,* 216; speech at Milwaukee, 279–290
Scott, Winfield, 391, 397, 407
Secession vs. union, 24–25, 66, 74, 75, 76, 99, 100–102, 103, 131, 185, 262, 264, 272, 273, 274, 276, 277, 278, 284, 285, 286, 288, 290, 294, 302–304, 312, 316, 331–359, 366, 367, 368, 372, 376, 405-406, 408
Seddon, James G., 380, 381, 382, 383, 384, 387; *quoted,* 385, 388–389
Seibles, John J., 270; *quoted,* 271
Senate Committee of Thirteen, 310–330, 378
Sewall, Thomas, 165, 166, 167, 168, 169; *quoted,* 166; speech at Methodist Conference, 165–166
Seward, William H., 29–50, 63, 65, 67, 69, 129, 130, 176, 192, 196, 206, 207, 208, 209, 210, 311, 314, 315, 316, 317, 322, 324, 325, 326, 328, 330, 402, 404, 407, 413; speech at Rochester, 29–50
Shakespeare, William, 148
Sharkey, William, 225, 235
Sherman, John, 116, 117
Sheridan, James B., 270
Shorter, John G., 355
Shepherd, Jacob R., *quoted,* 96
Shurtleff College, 82; literary societies, 72, 81, 83; Alpha Zeta, 81 n., 82, 83 n.; Sigma Phi, 81 n.
Simpson, Matthew, 169
Singleton, Otho R., 115, 126
Slave trade, 14–15, 36 n., 74, 76, 152, 161, 167, 179, 202, 221, 322, 381
Slaveholding, 100, 164, 165, 332, 367
Slavery: Biblical position on, 1, 11–14, 28, 58, 76, 295, 332; and civil liberties, 25, 28; controversey over extension into territories, 39, 55, 58–59, 64, 73, 75, 103, 131, 144, 178, 179, 180, 190, 202–203, 204, 215, 219–220, 221, 266–268, 273, 275, 283, 313–314, 316, 318, 321, 322, 326–328, 352; in the District of Columbia, 144, 145, 246–247, 247 n., 333, 381; economics of, 18–19, 100, 332, 367; legality of, 19–21; and preservation of the Union, 24–25; and sectional depravity, 22–24, 287, 293–294
Slaves, fugitive, 21, 28
    See also Fugitive Slave Law
Slidell, John, 182, 273
Small, William F., 6
Smith, Austin E., *quoted,* 191
Smith, Caleb B., 208, 213; *quoted,* 210, 387
Smith, "Extra Billy," 116, 127
Smith, Gerrit, 2, 7, 15, 148
Smith, J. Henley, *quoted,* 313
Smith, John, 125
Smith, William H., 213
Somerset Case, 20 n.
Soule, Bishop, 159
Soule, Pierre, 230
South Carolina College, literary societies, 73 n., 74 n., 76–77, 83; Clariosophic, 73 n., 74 n., 76–77; Euphradian, 77 n.
South Carolina Sovereignty Convention, 320
Southern Commercial Convention, 2
Southern depravity, alleged, 22–24, 287, 293–294
Southern Rights party, 333, 334, 335
Southern solidarity, 177
Spalding, Rufus P., 87, 88, 92
Speakership contest, 116–117
Spooner, Lysander, 129
Springfield Lincoln Rally, 212–224
Stampp, Kenneth M., 193; *quoted,* 80 n., 396 n.
Stebbins, Sumner, 250; *quoted,* 256–258
Steedman, J. B., 174
Stephens, Alexander H., 80, 101, 175, 189, 313, 334, 335, 336, 337, 339, 340–344, 345, 349, 350, 353, 355, 356, 357, 358, 359; *quoted,* 336, 341–344, 350, 351, 352, 354, 357; speech in Georgia secession debate, 340–344
Stephens, Linton, 272, 355, 356, 358, 359; *quoted,* 183, 351
Stevens, Thaddeus, 116
Stewart, Alvan, 140
Stockton, Robert, 383, 386, 387; *quoted,* 388, 389
Stokes, William B., 116
Stone, Henry O., 135
Stuart, Charles E., 174, 182, 189, 190; *quoted,* 189; speech at Democratic Convention, 189–190
Students: debates on national issues, 71–84; withdrawal of southern, 117
Suffrage, Negro, 145, 337
Sumners, George W., 384; *quoted,* 386–387
Sumner, Charles, 8, 52, 362, 369, 393
Sutliff, Milton, 94
Swain, David, 75
Swan, George W., 94; *quoted,* 93
Swett, Leonard, 213

Taney, Roger B., 79, 399, 407, 409
Tappan, Henry, 73

Tariff, controversy over, 72, 103, 143, 204, 207–208, 270, 283–284, 291, 293, 339, 342, 363, 364, 376, 377, 385; of 1816, 102; Morrill Bill, 376, 377
Taylor, Bayard, 108, 110, 111–113; speech to Cincinnati Lyceum, 111–113
Taylor, Nathaniel G., 235
Taylor, Zachary, 30
Temperance, 79, 154
Testimony Law, 142, 144, 147
Thackeray, William, 109
"Thanksgiving Sermon" by Palmer, 291–309
Thayer, Eli, 199
Thomson, E. M., 160, 162, 165, 166; *quoted,* 161, 162; speech at Methodist conference, 160–162
Thompson, R. W., *quoted,* 327
Thomwell, James Henry, 293, 306
Thorne, J. W., 246
Tibbets, H. B., *quoted,* 263
Todd, David, 174
Tomlinson, Reuben, 247
Tompkins, Cydnor B., 115
Toombs, Robert, 30, 55 n., 183, 311, 313, 314, 317, 319, 320, 321, 322, 323, 325, 326, 328, 334, 336, 339–340, 342, 344, 345, 349, 352, 355, 359, 395; *quoted,* 184, 323–324, 339–340, 342, 343–344, 353; speech in Georgia secession debate, 339–340
Townsend, George Alfred, 242, 251; *quoted,* 258
Trescott, W. H., 327
Troup, George M., *quoted,* ix
True Southrons, 174, 182–183
Trumbull, Lyman, 213, 216, 217, 220–222, 363, 369, 374; *quoted,* 220, 222, 374; speech at Springfield Lincoln rally, 220–222
Tuck, Amos, *quoted,* 387
Tucker, Duane C., 279
Turner, Thomas J., 390; *quoted,* 390
Tyler, John, 380, 382, 387; *quoted,* 389

Uncle Tom's Cabin, 16
Underground railroad, 21, 22, 118, 136, 249, 253, 365, 372
Union party, 217, 225
United States v. Bushnell, 88, 93

Vance, Zebulon B., 127
Vanderhoff, George, 110
Van Dyke, Henry, 306; *quoted,* 307
Van Dyke, J. B., 291
Vaux, Richard, 269
Villard, Henry, *quoted,* 400
Virgil, 148
Virginia, University of, 76; literary societies, 76, 77; Washington, 76

Wabash College literary societies, 81 n.; Calliopean, 81 n.; Lyceum, 81 n., 83
Wack, Chauncey, 85
Wade, Benjamin F., 311, 315, 316, 317, 319, 320, 321, 326
Waldo, O. H., 285
Walker, Leroy Pope, 190
Walker, Samuel P., 227
Wallace, Daniel, 107
Walterboro Academy, 291
War of 1812, 370
Ward, Samuel R., 17
Warner, Hiram, 351, 355
Washburne, Israel, 115, 116
Washington College literary societies, 81, 82, 82 n.; Union, 81, 82
Washington, George, 21, 203, 248, 251, 337, 346, 366, 386, 410
Washington Peace Conference, 378–391, 395
Webster, Daniel, 6, 29, 31, 48, 56, 210, 314 n., 366, 402; *quoted,* 30
Weed, Thurlow, 29, 30, 31, 33, 196, 206, 207, 210, 314 n., 320, 324, 361–362; *quoted,* 32, 407
Welles, Gideon, 45
Wesley, John, 12, 156, 166
White, Andrew D., 282
White, John R., 49
White, Thomas, 389
Whitman, Walt, 399
Whittier, James, 17, 148, 253
Wickliffe, Charles A., 380, 383; *quoted,* 385, 390
Wide-Awake companies, 213
Wigfall, Louis T., 225, 233, 317, 407; *quoted,* 319
Wight, Lathrop, 134
Willson, Hiram V., 90, 91
Wilmot, David, 199, 383; *quoted,* 200, 204
Wilmot Proviso, 199, 221
Wilson, Henry, 137 n., 139, 145, 146, 149, 150, 151, 369; *quoted,* 40, 60–61
Wilson, James, 125
Wilson, John, 216, 217–218, 220; *quoted,* 217, 218; speech at Springfield Lincoln rally, 217–218
Wiltse, Charles M., *quoted,* 99
Winston, John, 276
Winthrop, Robert C., 54, 56, 62
Wise, Henry A., 52 n.
Wisner, Moses, 364
Women's rights, 243, 254, 254 n.
Wright, Ambrose R., 116, 228
Wright, John C., 380

Yale University, 336
Yancey, William Lowndes, 40, 42, 52 n., 61, 65, 79, 99, 106, 174, 187, 188, 189, 190, 191, 192, 225, 226, 227, 229, 232, 233, 236, 239, 264 n., 271, 272, 276, 278, 394; *quoted*, 188, 228, 229–231; speech at Democratic Convention, 187-189; speech in Memphis campiagn, 227–233
Yates, Richard, 213, 362–363, 373–375; *quoted*, 374–375; Illinois inaugural address, 373–375
Yulee, David L. 313

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